

Lost & Found Life

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Lost & Found Life

by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#), [Lady_Cleo](#)

Summary

Will Graham, an Omega all alone in the world, ends up pregnant and abandoned. His life collides - quite literally - with a handsome Alpha and his family, and before Will can blink, he's been mistaken for someone else. Someone with a better life than his. A life he can't possibly hope to keep.

(A Hannibal/ Mrs. Winterbourne mashup.)

Notes

My first plunge into the Omegaverse pool. The A/B/O Hannigram rewrite of Mrs. Winterbourne and its very existential source novel that nobody asked for. It's like 70% the movie, like 30% the show. I tried.

Opening Notes/ Here We Go

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

NOTES: This story contains fictionalized versions of real people. I am borrowing names, a few background details, appearance, etc. Everything else is entirely made up and I am not implying any real world knowledge of these people. And I don't own the rights to anything or anyone I'm putting in here, except the intellectual property that is my words. So pretty please no suing.

Lt. Frost is my own creation, a leftover from a story under one of my previous profiles on another site. She's a badass. Imagine Beverly if she were Bedelia's age.

Note for the opening chapter: you have ***NO*** idea how much I wanted to make Chilton the guy who knocks Will up and drops him... if only for what happens later. But I grudgingly realized the best analog to the character in the movie was Matthew so... there ya go. Chilton still makes an appearance though.

Also one minor note about Matthew. He's what I'm referring to as a demi-alpha, which I know isn't really a thing, but I needed him to be able to get Will pregnant without being... too much of an overall threat. He's dangerous because he hates people not taking him seriously. You have alphas and betas and omegas and capital A ALPHA of the Alphas like Hannibal. Matt is like a half-step above a beta, technically alpha but *just* barely. He's kind of like the outcome of alpha and omega twins who merged: slight, emotional, a little pretty but not as pretty as a pureblood omega, and strong but weaker than a true alpha. Everyone confused? Good. Let's go.

It's a beautiful day in Baltimore. The sun is shining, and the church is lavishly decorated. Father Brian Zeller is waiting calmly outside, chatting with the groom's mother - Grace Lecter, a lovely and bold Omega unwithered by age - as they usher in last minute arrivals and wait for the cue that the ceremony is about to begin.

An unpleasant whine like a wounded animal breaks through the conversation, and they look as a somewhat battered Crown Vic pulls to a stop at the curb. There's someone in the backseat, but their focus is quickly drawn to the pair walking towards them with intent, dressed in matching 'government issue' suits, trench coats, and solemn expressions.

The beta (lovely, creamy skin, dark almond-shaped eyes that have the telltale signs of having seen too much in their life) flashes a badge - Baltimore PD - and her partner, a solid looking alpha male with beautiful cocoa skin whips out his Moleskin notebook and a cheap ballpoint.

"Hello, Father. Sorry to interrupt."

The robed beta replies, affable as always. "Quite all right. The ceremony isn't underway yet, my child."

"I'm Agent Crow - sorry. *Detective*," the alpha amends with a rueful smirk. "Too many years in the FBI. I'm Detective Jack Crawford, this is my partner Lt. Chelsea Frost. We'd like to talk to Mrs. Lecter."

Grace glances at Father Brian and tilts her head in a questioning posture that leaves no question as to her authority. Frost thinks they should have her teach a class; that is a useful look to master.

"That would be me."

Now it's the officers' turn to regard each other, and Jack refers to his notes. "Mrs. ... *Shannon* Lecter?"

"He is my daughter-in-law. And about to be again."

Perpetually averse to conflict in any measure, Father Brian jumps on the obvious next question, desperate for answers and normalcy and the sweet buttercream icing on the cake at the reception when this is all over. "Excuse me, but what is this regarding?"

Lt. Frost speaks up. "The murder of Matthew Brown."

There's a pause, barely the space between two heartbeats, and Grace squares up and tilts her chin to a borderline defiant angle. "Then you will want to speak with me."

"And... why is that?"

Her smile is small, barely a quirk of lips in the corners, zero teeth. Yet there is something indefinable in it that makes both detectives just a little nervous.

"Why... because I am the one who killed him."

Oh, boy. Matthew Brown. That's a name Will would rather forget. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's go back to the beginning.

The Bad Beginning

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

How an Omega named Will Graham found himself alone in New York City... twice.

Chapter Notes

The kickoff to the story proper! We're going baaaaaaack....

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will Graham had grown up in a cute little house on a Louisiana backwater with an Omegan father named Bill. His mother Shannon, an alpha with a heart too weak for all the love she carried, had died a week shy of her 40th birthday when the landlord's son got drunk and came over at 1 in the morning demanding more rent. The landlord made a deal that they could live rent free if they kept their mouths shut while he bundled his kid off to rehab. Will had been 3.

His father recovered slowly if incompletely, and taught his son everything he knew. For Will's 10th birthday, the landlord's wife gave him a computer and a gift card for some new clothes. He offered to pawn them, but Bill put his foot down. Will used the computer to get his GED at 15, and started taking online courses at the local college while the school would still pay him to earn credits.

3 weeks before Will's 18th birthday, he got a bachelor's degree in education, and Bill closed the boat repair yard and took them out to celebrate at Caro's Crawfish Cabin. They talked about where Will might apply, if he'd get a student teacher slot or have to wait another year, and maybe even get a job at Tulane one day. The next morning, Will found his dad quiet and cold in his lounge, a peaceful smile on his face.

He informed the parish LEOs, buried his dad in the marsh next to his mom, and used the gift card he'd saved to buy a sturdy bag, some clothes and a few books. With one exception, he sold everything of value in the house and bought a bus ticket to New York City, sewing the rest of the money into the lining of his coat and the bottom of his new bag.

Around his neck on a cheap leather cord, he carried his mother's locket - the only tangible memory of her he had, the only thing he couldn't bring himself to sell. One side held a photo of Shannon Louise Lacherie-Graham, the curve of her stomach less of a giveaway that she

was carrying Will than the curve of her smile. The other held an engraving: "Destiny awaits you. All you must do is find it."

Hence New York, the city of Fate - or so Will thought. Arriving on his 18th birthday, emerging from the subway terminal like a second birth, the first thing he decided to do was get something to eat.

Stingy Lulu's was a place to do that, and relatively cheaply, and as Will was counting coins and a few crumpled bills left over from the trip (not wanting to break out his emergency stashed cash) a guy a few years older slid into the seat across from him. In no time, he'd learned it was Will's birthday, inciting him to pay as long as they could go out to celebrate.

Matt took Will home that night, swaying slightly from the pitcher of Bayou Beer he'd insisted they share, and chastely tucked him in with a dry kiss on the forehead.

A week later, Will's first heat hit and Matt helped him through it, keeping him hydrated with Gatorade and feeding him granola bars and beef jerky from the bodega down the street. And Will stayed, winter to summer.

Matt didn't give him flowers, but Will had his pick of stolen car stereos and designer knockoffs, and the guys liked him as a mascot who could fix up the radios to bring in more cash and bring them snacks while they worked. The strapping demi-alpha took care of his little omega, not bonding because he knew Will didn't want it, not asking for too much in return.

At least that's what Will told himself when he woke up in the middle of the night, half-pinned under Matt's sweat-soaked form, thighs chafed and coated in drying slick and semen as it dribbled out around Matt's smaller than average knot, slowly being deafened by his snores.

But if this was supposed to be destiny, Will couldn't help but want a little more. Sliding out from under Matt, he headed to the bathroom to clean himself up and get a drink of water. The moonlight through the wavy glass bounced off Will's locket, and he slipped it off to look at the knowing smile of the woman he hoped to be like someday.

"C'mon, Mom. I'm starting to get a little antsy here. Can you gimme ... I mean, I don't know if it's against the rules, but I'd appreciate a sign. Just one, so I know I'm... where I'm supposed to be." He pressed the locket closed and kissed the smooth metal before sliding it back over his head and going to sleep.

5 weeks later, he got a sign. It was little and pink and way more of a surprise than it should've been. All Will could say was "whoa."

He should've known better.

He stuck his head into the hall and called Matt, who was meeting with his boys about the spots they were gonna hit that night. Matt begrudgingly came, only to stare blankly at the test in Will's hand. Due to his nature, the demi-alpha sometimes got confused, so Will decided to help him out.

"We're gonna have a baby, babe. Isn't that great?"

"Oh, and I suppose you're gonna tell me it's mine?" If he'd backhanded him, Will couldn't have been more surprised.

"Of... course it's yours. I mean... I've never. Who else would it be?"

Matt's hand struck with the speed of a viper, gripping a handful of Will's curls and dragging him into the living room. He drove him to his knees on the small carpet by the coffee table, ignoring the omega's yelp of shocked pain. Even half-crouched on the floor, Will stood corrected. He absolutely *could* be more surprised by the heretofore unknown depths of Matt's assholery.

He interrogated his guys for a few minutes, demanding one of them own up to screwing the omega, Will watching through a stinging blur of tears as they all looked at their mascot, helpless to do anything more for him but deny it.

Eventually Chill, (whose real name Will knew was Fred Chilton, kicked out of med school for cheating and blackmail) a sleazy fence who thought he was way cooler than he was, copped to 'giving the little bitch a tumble' out of boredom while he'd waited for Matt the month prior. Will remembered the visit. He'd let the man in, grabbed a book and hunkered down in the bedroom with the door locked until Matt came home. Chill had never appreciated Will blowing off his advances, and usually tried to add 'alone time' with the omega into their negotiations until one of the guys hit him with a *look* that made him back off.

Apparently Chill didn't forget or forgive such slights to his nonexistent character. So Matt agreed to 10% less on the next few shipments, and Chill got to say he'd knocked up Will.

Will had fled to the bathroom while negotiations were going on, stomach protesting the situation with acidic fervor. One of the guys came in to "pee" and handed him a sleeve of smooshed Saltines without looking at him, and Will crawled to the bedroom to start packing, nibbling on stale crackers while he shoved everything he owned into his bag. There was money in the wall safe but Will didn't dare touch it; if Matt was gonna let him go, he'd go with only his stuff.

He made it as far as the front door before Matt caught him, demanding to know what he was doing. He tried to grab Will's bag, but Will held on like a mongoose, tiny fangs bared, a hiss escaping his throat. "I'm just taking my stuff. I didn't take anything of yours. I just wanna go, Matt. Leave me alone and let me go." Wrenching the bag out of Matt's grasp sent him stumbling back a few feet and while he concentrated on not losing his footing, Matt snatched up his coat - formerly Will's dad's, the only thing of Bill's he'd kept besides a small toolkit. His knife was slashing the lining before Will could move.

"That's mine! Matt, don't!" A handful of bills, maybe \$140, fell to the floor like dead birds. They both reached, but Matt got to them first, shoving Will back another step.

"Consider it slut tax. I knew you had something in here, the way you'd never let it out of your sight. And you got more. I know it. Now gimme the bag." Will's fierce grip on the bag

redoubled, and he hissed again. "I said *gimme the bag*, you little tramp!" Will's eyes flashed to the guys standing in the kitchen doorway, watching the exchange like they had money on it. Jackson, the guy who'd handed Will the crackers, made a noise to draw Matt's attention. When he wheeled to tell them all to shut up, Will used the bag like a blocking dummy and knocked Matt off balance, grabbing what cash he could and fleeing down the hall.

He ran to the street, past the bodega, and down the nearest subway tunnel. He hopped the turnstile like an Olympian clearing a hurdle, and slid into the train just as the doors closed. Keeping the bag against his front like a kid in a carrier, Will tried to hold himself up using the pole despite shivers that seemed to intensify with every rattle of the car. Unable to focus enough to filter and block, Will's gift (pure unfiltered empathy) ran rampant in the car, gauging everyone in his vicinity for threat. He babbled about unearned midterm grades and cheating husbands until an elderly Beta woman pried his hands off the pole and sat him beside her on a hard plastic chair.

She spoke in some foreign language Will didn't understand while she dabbed at his tears with a handkerchief, fed him cookies and a little meat pie, and made him drink some of her tea. No one bothered them. The little woman took Will home with her, feeding him a plate of hot food and patting his head like a puppy til he cried himself to sleep on her couch, and was completely unsurprised when he was gone before the sun rose.

Chapter End Notes

Next up, the progression of Will's pregnancy and how he takes a very fateful step.

7 Month Split

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Pregnancy progresses, Matt's still a dick, and Will ends up heading in a very important direction.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will found himself talking to the baby as it grew. He sang when it was restless, usually some classic rock like Bowie and Creedence, lyrics he knew by heart as he rubbed little circles over his stomach. He scored a 6 month room at the Center for Omegan Welfare and worked as a waiter at an omega-friendly restaurant (helpful given his nearly chronic craving for tater tots dipped in ranch during the second trimester) until he couldn't fit the uniform anymore. Being on his feet all day was killing him anyway, even if people tended to leave bigger tips to an expectant mother. His degree lingered in the back of his mind, but he dismissed its occasional whispers. No place would hire a knocked-up Omega only to have to let them off in a few months.

A job as a fake psychic lasted over a month, glad his 'gift' could at least be put to some good use. But the owner grew unscrupulous, pushing Will to make bigger predictions to keep people on the hook longer, so he quit.

He blew the last of his money on luxuries like food, socks and toothpaste. His time at the Center ran out and he was facing a scary prospect: his first night on the streets. He couldn't risk another Matthew, but he didn't know what he was going to do.

The sky had been threatening all day when he ended up by the bodega, belly distended under a faded Grateful Dead shirt from a donation bin and his last clean flannel buttondown. He didn't want to but if there was a chance Matt wasn't the complete douchenozzle he'd seemed when Will had run, for the baby's sake he had to try. He buzzed the apartment twice and stepped back to wait for Matt's head to appear at the window.

"What the hell do you want?"

"I'm about to have your kid in the gutter. Thought you might wanna come watch."

"You don't want me to come down there, Will. I'm warning you."

The omega snarled. "Oh I *want* you to come down here, Matt!"

He quailed a bit at the retort, then rallied. "I will."

"Come on then!" Will squared his shoulders as best he could.

Matt's bravado instantly failed. "I'm not coming down there! Are you nuts?"

"I musta been to take up with you! But you owe me, man. I got no place, I got no money." Realizing the need for a change in tactic, Will drew a deep breath and tilted his head, framing his neck in a submissive gesture of appeasement. He softened his voice, stowing the angry rant to fix Matt with the doe eyes he always claimed to love. "You always said we understood each other when no one else did. C'mon, Matty... Please?"

It seemed to have an effect for a few seconds, until a noise behind him in the apartment broke the spell. His face contorted back into a vicious sneer and he flicked something metallic to the pavement by Will's sneaker.

It was a quarter.

"Go find a payphone and call someone who gives a shit." With that he pulled his head back inside and slammed the window. Will started to walk off, then turned back with a sigh to scoop up the coin. He could use all he could get right now.

The heavens parted as though his mother and all the angels were weeping for his predicament, and while Will appreciated the support, he didn't appreciate the soaking of his clothes. He ducked under the awning of the bodega to dig out his umbrella, a broken thing left by one of his customers and jerry-rigged to function with duct tape, wire and perseverance.

"Will?"

He flinched but turned anyway, bumping right into Jackson, wide-eyed and holding a bag of Mexican takeout. Will was temporarily distracted by the greasy aroma of Spanish rice and seasoned meats until Jackson ducked to catch his eyes.

"You okay, man?" Will shrugged, too tired and drained for much social interaction. "You... got big." Again, Will gestured rather than speak. "You, uh... got a place to stay tonight?" The hope that flared in Will's eyes must've been like a beacon because Jackson's face instantly paled. "Oh, no. Sorry. Matt'd kill me if I took you home. But... here." He handed the bag off to Will and dug in his pockets until he produced his wallet and a pale blue flier. "There's a shelter on the West Side. My sister works there sometimes. They're a little preachy but they always have a bed for an omega in need."

He liberated the bag and pressed the flier and a \$10 for fare into Will's hands. He started to walk away, but at Will's genuine (and exhausted) thanks, he turned back and added a hefty burrito to the pile. Off Will's look, he shrugged and gave a tiny smile. "It's Chill's. Dude never even says thank you. Screw 'im." He waved off Will's awed thanks and headed off again.

Will shoved the paper in his pocket and devoured the burrito in tiny quick bites to make sure it stayed down. Carne asada, guac, tomatoes, beans and cilantro rice; it was the best thing he'd tasted in days. The bodega owner brought him a cup of *agua fresca* on the house, warning Will he might want to move as Matt and the boys would be on their way down soon after dinner. Taking a minute to study the map and rub his momentarily sated stomach, he shrugged his pack a little higher on his shoulders, put up the umbrella and headed for Grand Central.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: All aboard! Next stop- Destiny.

Next Stop: Destiny

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Will ends up on the wrong train (or maybe the right one) and meets a very charming Alpha and his very pregnant mate. And things take a turn.

Chapter Notes

I don't know or own or have any connection to the Mikkelsen family. I just needed to borrow the action figures for this scene. Ever respectful in my intent, I swear.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will made it to the terminal in record time, trying to find the right subway to take him crosstown to the shelter. The crush of people swirled and swarmed like the eddies in the creek behind his home, and after a while he was picked up off his feet and carried along like a cork in the current. He tried to turn or get down, but it was worse than trout trying to swim upstream. He had no choice to but go along for the ride.

Unfortunately, at the last minute the group bypassed the clamshell terminals for Metro cards and went down yet another flight of steps towards a train. Like a *real* train - gleaming silver metal striped with fast red splashes and sleek black lines. A real train that was **not** a subway and that \$10 absolutely would **not** cover a ride on.

Before he could break free, the swell of people bore him onboard. He was released as they suddenly scattered like tadpoles - just as the doors slid shut with a hiss.

Ohhhh, shit.

He was almost knocked sideways as the train lurched and he headed down the aisle looking for a way out or off that didn't involve jumping. An older alpha in the aisle seat was irritated by his protruding stomach when he stumbled over a bag strap until she glared at him.

"Uh. Sorry." She snapped her paper back in front of her like she was cutting the interaction short, and didn't quite hide the roll of her eyes when Will spoke again. "Scuse me, ma'am? But where's this train going?"

She regarded him a moment, then let her eyes drop to his belly before she answered, "Baltimore. Maryland," in a softer voice than he'd expected. He mumbled a thanks and shuffled on his way. Okay. There were worse places to end up and start over than the nation's capitol; all Will had to do was make sure he didn't get caught before he got there.

Will spotted the conductor just before he would've heard him. "Tickets!" The snap of his puncher sounded like a metallic alligator, like a beartrap trying to spring closed. "Tickets!" People around him were shuffling, pulling out pieces of paper that proved their right to be here. Will was pretty sure they didn't just chuck people off moving trains anymore, but he did know he was not in possession of that magic little slip that would let him stay.

He turned and started fleeing up the aisle as fast as his swollen stomach and stuffed pack would allow, letting the crush of people act as a fluid barrier between him and the conductor. Occasionally he pleaded quietly with a passenger, but everyone here must be a goddamn beta or already mated and therefore unaffected by the rising scent of omegan distress and the beads of sweat along Will's brow and neckline. He tumbled backwards when someone stood up suddenly - and fell right into the arms of the conductor. The man - definitely a beta from the null aroma that lingered under the scent of starched wool and authority - righted Will and held out a hand.

"Tickets?"

The man who'd stood so abruptly met Will's eye, giving him a glimmer of hope... before handing over a single fare to be punched and shoving his way to the toilets. If he weren't so stunned he could've used the distraction to run a little farther - but as it stood so did Will, eyes stinging a bit from unexpected tears. He jumped as high as his increased size allowed when a hand landed on his arm.

"Tickets?" The conductor asked again, kind but firm. Will made a token dig through the outer pocket of his bag, giving what he hoped was a convincing 'no luck' expression.

"Uhhh, my... erm... husband must have them. Honey?!" He looked over the conductor's shoulder and used his turn to look to scuttle through the nearest door... and bumped right into a very handsome man standing by the crowded bar in the club car. Under the stench of body heat and strange people and alcohol and processed food, he caught an intoxicating Alpha scent (autumnal forests and moonlight with a hint of leather) and his knees went watery with relief. The man caught Will as he faltered a little, giving him a smile to indicate no harm done as he set the omega back on his feet. Unable to help it, Will cataloged the man in a minute. *Alpha, married, slight overbite giving him a very charming smile, decidedly foreign, well educated, kind eyes, dancer, former gymnast. Estranged from his family, tense relationship with his father. Pregnant mate.* But he seemed... nice.

Especially compared to the conductor who barreled in a minute later.

"Tickets!" His voice was demanding for a beta, clearly pissed that Will had bolted on him.

The beautiful man gave Will a hidden wink under the fall of indescribably metallic hair across his forehead and reached for his wallet. "I have our tickets, sir." His voice was accented and lyrical, acoustic guitars on a summer night. He pulled out two slips of paper that

might as well be printed on gold for their worth to Will, and handed them over to be punched. Unable to look away from his knight in striped wool sweater, Will didn't realize his mouth bypassed his brain until he heard his voice, quiet but a little snarky.

"Told ya I had a husband."

"Well, *naturligt* he has a husband. Look at him!" Then the man stepped in and looped an arm around Will's shoulders, pulling the slight omega close into the shield of his body and flashing the gleaming silvery band on his finger. "Or were you implying something about my *wife*?" His tone frosted a little as he plucked the tickets from the conductor's hand, watching him stammer an apology before sending him off. Will's rescuer waited til the conductor was once again swallowed by a wall of people to relinquish the omega and put the tickets away with an adorable smirk.

"Thanks for that. Ummm..." Wil fidgeted with the strap on his shoulder. "We're... not *really* married, are we? I've had a rough couple of..." *Days, weeks, months. Life.* "It's been a time."

"Well, then you need this more than I do," the man answered, passing over a sweating glass of iced bubbly liquid which Will sipped at gratefully. Taking up a damp bottle of cool water, he guided Will with a gentle hand between the shoulder blades and they headed back a few cars. Though he'd normally never go off with a stranger, something about this man spoke in soothing rumbles to Will's inner self. It whispered of safety and a lack of danger, so tempting a notion that Will let himself be swayed.

"I did not realize it would be so crowded. But I forgot about Spring Break. Very big with you Americans, is it not?"

"Well, Dane-Lithuanian background and studies in Denmark aside, you still grew up here." The man stumbled and turned to Will with wide dark eyes. They flashed from mahogany brown to a bright amber, like sunlight trapped in a glass of his dad's whiskey. *Well, in for a penny*, he reasoned, and drew in a deep breath, tasting the Alpha scent on the roof of his mouth. "Y-y-you said *naturligt*. Could've been German but it's Danish. Right?" The benefit of the cultural mishmash of clientele he'd had in New York was he'd learned to identify things fast, so as not to give offence. "It was out before you could stop it so you speak it - and probably think in it too - on a regular basis. Maybe with your mate? But your accent is tempered, like you grew up here learning from native speakers. And the last name on your ticket. Lecter. That's... Lithuanian. Right?" The man's jaw dropped a little more, then snapped shut, giving him a slight pucker of consideration as he stared at Will.

"How... could you know all that?" Will dropped his gaze and managed a noncommittal sound around another small sip, clearly not wanting to talk about it. The man regarded him carefully, then sighed with just a touch of resignation. "Very well. Story for another time. So long as I hear it." And he turned and directed Will to follow him once more.

He was focused on counting the stripes on the guy's hand-knit sweater as they continued down the hallway, and so didn't notice he'd stopped until he almost collided with the man's broad back. Then a door opened and Will was ushered into a compartment.

The first thing he noticed was the way the place smelled. So sensitive in the last few months to the smell of everyone and everything around him, scents had become overwhelming at times. This room was awash in the unmistakable (if not entirely familiar) aroma of... love and security. Tears prickled behind his eyes. He wanted to bottle it like perfume and use it to make everywhere smell like this.

"Now... where is my...?" The man mused as he shut the door behind them and opened his water, downing half in one go.

A blonde Beta exited the bathroom, stopping nearly pregnant belly to pregnant belly with Will with a surprised "Oh!"

"Hanne!"

"Mads." She kept Will in her peripheral as she sidled close and offered her cheek to her husband. "Did you get my drink?"

Will gestured with the almost empty glass, ice clinking. "I think he gave it to the pregnant omega he picked up."

"I like him better than you." Hanne gave him a slight swat on the shoulder and Mads caught her hand, kissed it, and gave her a blindingly affectionate grin. "Alright I'll go get you another one. Who knows? Maybe I will get lucky again. Play nice, you two." Fortunately a beta and omega were capable of just that.

Hanne gave Will some dry clothes and helped him towel his damp curls, and they chatted with relative ease for people with little in common but the biological. She was a few inches taller than him but Will welcomed the extra length that covered his fingers and toes, making him feel cocooned and safe and grateful that everything mostly fit.

He learned Hanne was a dance instructor, the orphaned daughter of a choreographer and an investment banker who'd spent her life in Denmark. Mads had been a dancer with her company for the past 5 years (using his middle name instead of the family title) and she'd found him an intriguing blend of ex-pat and neighbor. Tucked in the lid of her suitcase was a black and white shot, clipped from a newspaper, showing the startling beautiful pair after a performance.



After the finale this last season, a relatively whirlwind romance had led to a borderline elopement, and Mads had opened up about his family. It merely added to the pile of things she loved about the man. So she'd taken his real last name and left her life behind for love, convincing him to take her home to reconnect and introduce their unexpected child to a new world. Will was her very first American conversation. He apologized, and she gave him a squeeze as she giggled.

Will gave sparing details about his own short life, but his 'Omega alone in the world' status was clear despite the dissembling. Between sympathy and soothing pets Hanne couldn't help but bestow on him, they helped each other into clean socks and slippers, bemoaning how big fingers and feet swell when expecting. Just as they sat down again, Hanne flexed the glittering ring on her finger trying to get some relief. Without warning, the ring went flying in a flashing arc before bouncing out of sight across the carpet. As instantly as their bellies allowed, Hanne and Will were on the floor feeling around for it.

"Oh no! He will murder me if I lose it." Both of them jolted as the door opened, revealing a bemused but smirking Mads leaning in from the hallway.

"Dear Penthouse, I worried it would be a long and... lonely train ride." Twin brows bolted on identically unamused faces as they looked up from the floor, and Mads held up a staying hand. "My apologies. There is a free table in the dining car, and if we go right now, we can sit down to eat. So come along. Yes?" The prospect of food made them both perk up.

"Of course, *mylimasis*. We will be just behind you." Hanne's smile lasted until the door closed behind her husband. "Ah gud, o Dieve!"

"Hang on." Will closed his eyes a moment, letting a pendulum swing to slow the world down on replay. He saw Hanne's face, her hands, how and where the ring would've bounced. A minute later, his fingers were closing over smooth metal and cut stones. "Got it!" He clambered back to his feet carefully, marveling at the diamond-studded surface. The overhead light played over the inside of the band, and Will turned it a little more to read the

inscription. *Mads & Hanne* was etched in elegant swirling cursive with the ampersand resembling intertwined hearts. "Oh wow," Will breathed. "That is so... beautiful."

"Try it on," Hanne suggested as she gracefully regained her stand.

"Isn't that... supposed to be bad luck?"

"*Lille en*, I am married to the man I love, who loves me back, about to pop with what will hopefully be our first child, and we are to meet his family... whom I have every faith are going to love us. I could not have bad luck." The grin on her face was so full of hope and light Will couldn't resist. The band slid snug over his knuckle and for a moment he just absorbed the sight of a beautiful ring on his finger and the things it represented. "But... we probably should go."

Hanne grabbed Will's bag by the handle and walked to the door.

Will immediately tried to ease the ring back off his finger, hoping it wouldn't go flying again. But it wouldn't come off. He tugged and pulled and twisted as he waddled towards the door, eventually sucking the knuckle into his mouth to wet it. It was just starting to give when there was a rumbling crash and the floor began to shake under their feet.

Luggage tumbled and Hanne fell through the open door into the hallway with a scream. Will tried to reach her but was flung off his feet into the bathroom and smacked his head on the mirror. Metallic screeching blended with human shouting in a cacophonous chorus of misery. The door wouldn't budge and the noise was getting louder by the second and the lights were flashing like Morse Code and the world was vanishing like someone drawing a shutter on a lens.

Will couldn't think of anything to do but coil protectively around his belly and let the growing darkness cradle him.

Chapter End Notes

If it helps, you already know he lives. Don't kill me.

Dare alla luce

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#).

Chapter Summary

Will wakes up in the aftermath of the literal derailment of his life.

This chapter contains ****Potentially TRIGGERING content**** (detailed warnings in the notes below)

Chapter Notes

Okay guys. POTENTIAL TRIGGERING CONTENT WARNING.

This chapter contains mentions of miscarriage, a brief instance of extreme emotional distress, references to character death and the disorienting feeling of having bad news hit and how people try to help you deal.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will woke to light. Too much light. Sunlight streaming through tall windows, bouncing off white walls and clean sheets and the void of memory.

Something in the corner of his mind insisted on its importance, annoyed it had been forgotten, pressing gently against his consciousness like a tiny questing foot -

Will's hands flew to his belly, already somehow aware of nothing there. His stomach was far too flat, the space beneath it far too still. There was quiet where he wanted none, a semi return to fitness far too soon to make him happy. Tears stung at his eyes like a furious clawed thing trapped in his head, and he let them come, pressing hard against the searing pain he found instead of the rounded lump of his lost child. He became vaguely aware of high-pitched keening, an unnatural layering of it, mechanical and organic alike. Then he realized the noises' origins. His monitors were screaming his state of distress, backed up with ear-splitting, heartbreaking confirmation by his Omegan call.

Medical staff and patients alike suddenly logjammed in the doorway to his room, all trying to reach the distressed omega and soothe his piercing cry. The beta medical team tried to corral saddened omegas and protective alphas and get them back to their own rooms, lest posture fights or worse break out. Had the windows been open and the sound allowed to carry, it could have caused multiple MVAs and an influx of patients to the ER.

A tiny dark-haired omega slipped the tangle and rushed to his side, gathering him close and squeezing with all the strength of her little body. It helped, long enough to quiet Will's audible distress beacon, and she was allowed to stay while the med staff looked him over and checked his slowly normalizing vitals.

He rocked in the omega's arms, inconsolable, staring without seeing at endless shifting white, like snowdrifts, like sand dunes in the wind. Touches made meaningless without his brain to contextualize made him think he was standing in a rainstorm, the way he had that night. Then he realized he was crying; they both were, gentle warm drops of natural saline anointing his skin like a baptism. Even some of the nurses were sniffing. Two words spilled from his lips like a mantra, unheard and unanswered though they quietly grew in volume unnoticed by the Omega uttering them.

'My baby, my baby, my baby...'

"Fine."

Will blinked, stunned back to reality like he'd fallen off a cliff. "What?"

The kindly beta nurse nearest his elbow gave him a smile and repeated herself. "I said, your baby's fine, hon."

Silence reigned a few moments longer, then the omega at his side let out a mini squeal of delight and hugged him tighter. "That's wonderful! Can we... I mean can he... see it? Him, her, whatever?"

The med staff exchanged glances and hedged a bit until Will flat out demanded his baby ***right this Goddamn minute!*** and everyone jumped a bit and left him alone. The little omega had to leave too but promised she'd be back to visit, and once again Will was on his own.

Then a nurse pushed in a little plastic cart holding a little pink bundle and Will stopped breathing, or thinking, or seeing anything else except the incredibly tiny thing being placed in his arms. Oblivious to anything else, they were left alone to just stare at each other, blue eyes looking into blue eyes as though plumbing the reflected depths of the ocean. He untucked her carefully and counted fingers and toes, marveling at her little tummy and the scent of her head. His gaze started making a circuit of the room and he noticed large bouquets of bright flowers, and a big teddy bear, and a basket full of baby things in the corner.

Trying to figure out if this was the train company making nice or just the most generous hospital ever, Will was lifting his slightly fussing daughter to settle against his shoulder when a pop of pink caught his eye. A laminated bracelet around her ankle emblazoned in capital letters proclaimed he was holding **BABY GIRL LECTER**.

Lecter? Will puzzled. Lec- why do I know that name? ... The couple on the train! Hanne! Aww damn it. They brought me the wrong baby. Will grabbed the call button and punched it like he was on *Jeopardy!*

"Kind of a shame, kiddo. You're a nice one." He kept pressing until he noticed a similar bracelet around his own wrist, stamped with - among other things like blood type and genders

- the name **H. LECTER.**

What?

He was still absorbing that when he dropped the call button and a flash of light caught his eye. A glittering band winked from the third finger of his left hand.

Ohhhh.... shit.

A doctor carrying a clipboard and an air of authority walked in with the nurse who'd brought in the baby. "And how are you feeling, Mrs. Lecter?"

All Will could manage was a stunned squeak. "What?"

"Oh I'm sorry to assume. Do you prefer Mr. Lecter?"

"No. I mean, yes. I mean, it doesn't matter. There's been a mistake."

The medicos shared a conspiratorial glance. "Well it wouldn't be the first time. Now. Do you remember the accident?"

Will snapped to attention at that. "I was in a train wreck. Who's gonna forget a *train wreck*?"

The doctor made a noncommittal noise. "You'd be surprised."

Will suppressed an eyeroll. Barely. *Save it for the Reader's Digest, doc.* "How long have I been here?"

A quick consultation of the chart before him, and the doctor replied, "About 8 and a half days."

"Holy shit!" His brain struggled, an engine needing fuel and grease to process correctly and tragically short on both. "Wh-where's here?"

"You're at Penn Presbyterian in Philadelphia, Mrs. Lecter. Everything's alright." But Will was already shaking his head against it, ragged curls swishing like leaves in a breeze.

"No, it's not. Something's really, really wrong. See, there was a lady on the train. Another pregnant lady."

A comforting hand was laid on his bicep. "Did you know her?" The past tense caught in his ear like a fish hook.

"*Did?! Oh, God. Oh, no!*" On autopilot, Will settled the baby in his lap and clutched at his head, trying to make sense of everything. "This is terrible. I... I need..." Inspiration struck like a lightning flash. *Mads!* "Where's Mads? I gotta talk to Mads!" A look passed between the medical professionals, and Will's heart took an express elevator to the floor. "NO! He's not dead, too, is he?" Will's fingers grasped the doctor's lapels and tugged him in, unaware of his panicked strength, unwilling to let go. "Tell me he's not dead!"

The nurse moved in and gently collected the baby, who'd begun to cry from its mother's distress, and set her back in the wheeled cart. Will's confusion kicked into overdrive and butted heads with his sudden intense maternal instinct. Without completely letting go of the doctor's coat, he reached for the baby and shouted, "Where are you taking her?! What the hell is going on? Tell me Mads isn't dead!!"

The doctor looked at the nurse, who nodded and wheeled the cart out of the room, and tried to disengage himself while calming Will. "Mrs. Lecter, please - it's going to be alright."

His head whipped back and forth like a viewer at a demented tennis match. "No it's not! Not if he's dead! Where are you going with my daughter?! *And stop calling me that!*" The nurse reappeared with a needle and inserted it in the IV. Every urban legend he'd ever heard screamed in his head. "What is that? What the hell is this?!" But Will's protests weakened as a wave of drug-induced relaxation swept over him. The last thing he remembered before the wave closed over his head was asking the nurse if she wanted onion rings with that...

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully we all got through that without too much lingering damage. I'll be in my bunker until tomorrow just in case. Anyone at RDC5 can kill me personally.

On a cool side note, the chapter title means "to give to the light" in Italian. This is a dual meaning. It's how they say "to give birth" and also Will starting to come back from the dark place he'd landed in. In a few ways. (Just discount the slightly against his will sedation at the end...)

Also, in the book/film, Connie accidentally gets on a train from Grand Central heading to Boston, and ends up at St Declan's hospital in Stamford CT, which is still like 170 miles from Boston. If Will was on a train from NYC to Baltimore, then Philadelphia is an appropriate southbound stand-in.

The Not-so-great Escape

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Will gets himself out of the hospital, and into a whole new situation.

Chapter Notes

I know, this is just under the wire for my posting schedule but I crashed hard after the whirlwind of international travel to RDC5.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next time Will awoke, he started formulating an escape plan. He tried to avoid the needle-happy nurse as much as possible, who seemed determined to "calm him down" any time he tried to sort things out. It was more of a feat than he'd intended, with no papers of his own and no other way he could think of to prove who he was; even the beautiful clipping from the paper had been shredded in the crash, only half of Mads' face left intact. So Will taped the black and white snippet beside his mother, and he let himself answer to the wrong name while being poked and prodded and drained and tested for the better part of a week. He would get out, and no one would find him, and that would be **that**.

Three days later he was ready to go. Hopefully the hospital wouldn't mind overly much if he helped himself to a few necessities for the baby. Then again, he was skipping out on what was probably a substantial as hell bill, so minor theft was incidental at this point.

He was as clean as he could be thanks to the en-suite shower, and had a stuffed diaper bag for the baby, but as all he had of his own were the underwear he'd come in wearing and his battered Chuck Taylors, he decided it couldn't hurt to borrow from Hanne's stylish clothes - especially since it was that or go naked. His bag had gone with Hanne into the hall before the wreck, and if it had stayed close enough, the best he could hope for was that the typo on his ID papers would work in his favor. Willia S. Graham could rest in peace somewhere while Will forged a new life for himself and his daughter wherever they landed, and did his best to honor the woman whose name he would temporarily bear and whose clothes he would temporarily wear. The height difference was (almost) negligible, and he was grateful she preferred undershirts and boyshorts instead of bras and panties, though at this point he'd wear a Hefty bag and stilettos if it got him out of here.

On a good day (like when his stomach wasn't a dead giveaway) Will could pass for beta, so the distinctive and somewhat androgynous detailing of a beta's wardrobe would still suit an omega until Will could get neutral clothing of his own. How he'd manage any sort of job without proper ID was a bridge he'd jump off when he came to it.

Right now he had to jet.

Just as he'd gathered everything and was about to slot the baby into a carrier, his phone started ringing. He ignored it since no one knew him or that he was here... did they? Two steps later he heard the nurse calling him from the station down the hall, threw his stuff in the closet and dashed under the covers just before she popped in to investigate why he wasn't answering.

"Aren't you going to answer the phone, Mrs. Lecter?"

Will forced a cheery smile of relief onto his face and silently ordered his heart to calm down from jackhammer intensity.

"Oh... is *that* what that is? Thank goodness. I thought my ears were ringing again." They made an overlapping grab for the receiver and Will yanked it firmly to his ear, eyeing her squarely until she left him alone before he answered.

"Hello?"

"...Hello." A smooth female voice that instantly both settled Will's nerves and made him unaccountably anxious came through the line. "This is Mrs. Lecter."

Will's heart did a double somersault and tried to leap out of his mouth. "What?!"

"Mads' mother." His heart rate slowly returned to normal, about the time he realized he should've responded somehow. "Hanne?"

"I'm sorry. I feel... so awful about all of this."

"I know, dear. We all do."

"Yeah. I mean, no. I mean... jeez this is difficult." All the explanations he could offer were tumbling around his brain like lottery balls, and he sat helpless, waiting with tempered hope that he might draw the winning combination to save his hide without hurting anyone.

"I wanted to come up and see you but the doctors prefer I not travel such a distance at present." Will had no answer to that, wondering what he could say that wouldn't risk killing this nice lady. "You do not have to talk now, dear. I know that you do not have any family now, so I wish you to consider our home your home."

"Oh," Will tripped. "That's very nice of you, ma'am but-"

The woman on the other end of the line made a dismissive noise far too elegant to be considered a snort or even a pshaw. "Nice has nothing to do with the matter. We are family, and you cannot argue with family. Besides, that is my grandchild you have there."

"Well..." Will began meekly.

"Now, I have sent a car to collect you."

"No you can't do that!" Will protested, but the connection on the line was growing crackly with static, and all he could make out was 'expecting you soon' before it disengaged.

Damn it. Now I really gotta get outta here. He bolted out of bed and grabbed everything including his daughter, easing out into the hall a few minutes later and looking towards the nurses' station before slipping down the opposite direction... whereupon he bumped right into a blond male beta in a stylish black uniform, watching him with a quizzical smile.

"Mrs. Lecter?"

Will shifted the bags in his grip and tried to edge past. "... Nope. Sorry."

The man simply reached for his wrist and read the bracelet still wrapped around the joint.
"That's what it says."

"Yeah well, don't believe everything you read." He tried again to slip by, but found himself relieved of his bags and forced to follow the man lest he forget the need for stealth and make a scene. When they reached the parking lot, Will spotted a classic looking vehicle in polished chrome and gleaming chocolate brown that practically screamed *money*.

"Whoa," Will breathed. "What is *this*?"

"This is a Rolls Royce," the beta informed him, opening the suicide-style rear door to load his bags.

"Wow. That's like the Cadillac of automobiles, huh?"

"No. The Bentley is the Cadillac of automobiles. *This* is a Rolls Royce." His serious tone was at odds with the twinkle in his eye, and Will was left uncertain if the beta was joking as he collected the baby and deftly secured her into a carseat that wouldn't look out of place on a space shuttle. Will shuffled and tugged uncomfortably at the hem of the soft blue sweater he was wearing, for lack of anything more useful to do with his suddenly empty hands.

"Look... I gotta explain something..."

The man tutted as he straightened again, cutting off Will's feeble attempt. "You don't explain stuff to me. I'm just Jimmy. Price, but no one actually calls me that." His warm brown eyes sparkled again with mild humor, and Will found himself smiling in spite of his unresolved nerves. "You have anything to explain, you explain to Mrs. Lecter." Handing Will into the back, he closed the door, giving him a toothy smile from the open window. "Okay, Mrs. Lecter?" Sliding into the front seat, Jimmy started the engine up with a jaguar-esque rumble and off they went.

They'd been driving in semi-awkward silence for almost 20 minutes before Will felt the need to say something. *Anything*.

"So, uh," Will began brilliantly, trying not to fiddle with all the knobs and buttons in the back seat. "Am I... what you expected?"

Jimmy's eyes met his in the rearview until Will lost his nerve and started picking a loose thread on jeans he could've sold for rent back in New York. *Intentionally distressed, my ass.*

"To be honest... no." The reply was gentle, merely honest. It raised Will's curiosity instead of his hackles. "Mads usually went for the 3 B's - blonde, beta, beautiful." Never mind. The hackles were up, along with an eyebrow. "Not that *you're* not- I mean, you're- in your own way... Omegas can be very appealing-" His backpedaling was cut off by a well-timed wail from the baby. Both grownups in the car let out a sigh of relief that faded like heat lightning as the cry grew in volume and intensity.

"Do you want me to pull over?" Jimmy offered.

"No. I... I got it." *I think.* Shushes were having no effect, so Will considered holding the baby to his chest to soothe her. But the carseat and its 9000 safety buckles looked a little daunting.

Unsure how to unlock so many straps, Will was about to ask for a knife to just slice the kid out when he hit on an idea. Easing down as carefully as his few lingering bruises and aches allowed, he laid his head on the baby's stomach and his curls under her nose, and started to sing softly. "Didn't know what time it was and all the lights were lo-o-ow, so I leaned back on my radio-o-o..."

The baby got a whiff of its mother's scent and felt the vibrations from the familiar voice on their belly, instantly beginning to calm. Tiny fists held handfuls of soft curls as their ears heard the story of the Starman, and by the second time all the children were boogieing she was fast asleep. He finished the song anyway, gently easing his hair out of her lax grip and sitting up, rubbing his hand over her tiny head and just watching her. He felt Jimmy's gaze and let his eyes flash up to the rearview, fully expecting some kind of judgmental smirk. But the butler's eyes were... kind. Unexpectedly warm. A little misty. Will offered a tentative smile before Jimmy turned his attention back at the road ahead.

The comfortable silence lasted almost a mile before a voice threaded from the front seat. "I can see why he liked you."

Too stunned to reply, Will managed companionable quiet for the remainder of the drive.

Chapter End Notes

So, readers of thehoyden might recognize Will's choice of lullaby. Her story 'With a Crown of Stars' was a revelation, and I hope she doesn't mind my borrowing a little something. Up next, Will meets the family. *dramatic musical sting*

First Impressions Can Leave a Mark

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Will meets the family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will drifted off about 50 miles from their destination and woke to Jimmy gently shaking his shoulder. He blinked the sleep out of his eyes and waited til Jimmy had unfastened the baby before gathering her up and stepping out, wondering why he couldn't see any neighbors. He walked a few feet away and looked down the winding tree-lined drive that led up from a wrought-iron gate set into a brick wall at least 500 yards away. His eyes followed the sloping manicured lawn in reverse to where they were standing.

Then he noticed the house.

"Holy shit," he breathed. The place was *massive*. 3 sweeping weathered stories of buff-colored stone, with different architectural styles for the windows on each floor. A tiled roof in rich mahogany sat atop stylish pitches and gables, trimmed in matching dark wood. The car was parked under an arching wood and stone cover that connected to the house, some throwback to the days of carriages so people didn't have to deal with inclement weather. Jimmy was standing there watching him with faint amusement, calmly waiting despite being laden with Will's stuff and the overflowing diaper bag. "Sorry."

"Happens all the time. Don't sweat it," Jimmy reassured him as he opened the door and gestured Will inside. The foyer was just as imposing as the edifice, particularly the antler and crystal chandelier hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles, and Will took it all in with a slack jaw.

"Hello, Hanne." Will's eyes flicked up to find a beautiful and elegant older woman posed on the staircase that wound down from an upper floor. Her eyes were an intelligent, changeable amber, her rosebud mouth quirked in one corner, silver-streaked auburn hair neatly styled, makeup flawless. Her coloring was offset by the rich black outfit she wore - mourning by Chanel. Her jewelry was understated pearls and platinum - earrings, a few rings, a bracelet, a lovely twisted freshwater strand at her neck. Everything from stance to sartorial choice bespoke wealth, poise, status. As she stepped down like a goddess descending, Will caught a trace of her delicate dessert-like Omegan scent (warm sugar and lilies) under a soft cloud of Dior perfume.

This wasn't right. He had to tell her.

"Something terrible has happened."

"Yes dear, I know."

Oh, God. "No, I mean... your terrible thing and my terrible thing are two... *different*... terrible things."

"Well, *naturligt*. You lost a husband, I lost a son." Will found himself too stunned to form an immediate response. *God damn it, this was gonna be hard.* "Hanne-"

"Shannon."

"Excuse me?" One elegant brow arched up, and Will swallowed hard before replying, having come up with a semi-plausible explanation on the drive over if he wasn't going to be able to get out of this anytime soon.

"My name is... Shannon, ma'am." *Middle name, but it still counts.*

"Odd." A tiny furrow appeared near her forehead. "I could have sworn Mads said... but then intercontinental phone connections being as they are..." Her brow and tone smoothed out. "Shannon it shall be, then."

"Thanks," Will said with a blush, neatly covering his relief. As long as he never had to take off the band on his finger, he just might pull this off til he could figure out an exit strategy that was as painless as possible for all concerned. In the meantime, his daughter could act as an olive branch, and he delicately offered her. "Do you... wanna hold..."

"My granddaughter." The elder omega took the baby in the cradle of her arms, looking as if she'd been born to it. "Ohh... It has been an *age* since last I did this."

"You're doin' fine," Will reassured, marveling at the softening effect his daughter was having on this woman. Those topaz eyes were smiling and bright, if slightly misty, and her mouth was curved with delight.

"Did you decide on a name yet?"

It almost seemed a joke, given the 9000 other things he'd been dealing with. "Not... really. No."

"Have you thought about Maddie? Spelled after... Mads. She looks so like him."

Will cast a beseeching look to Jimmy, still standing in the foyer, laden with stuff. The beta smiled, shrugged, and gave a tiny nod.

"Okay. Sure. Maddie it is." Nice enough, and if nothing else it would work with his real last name.

"Mother!" A familiar voice floated down slightly ahead of an elegantly dressed man, and Will looked up just in time for his heart to thud into his shoes. It was Mads! He was here. *How was he here?!* This was good! This *wasn't* good. He'd explain everything. Oh God he'd

explain *everything!* Will didn't think he'd really done anything wrong yet, but it *felt* like he had, and his inner omega was keening in fear at the prospect of angering an Alpha. Or breaking the heart of such a charming woman as the Omega still holding his daughter. Whom he had to grab and get the hell out of here **NOW**.

"Okay. That's enough." He quickly collected Maddie and struggled to get his bags away from Jimmy and over his shoulder. "We gotta go. It was very nice meeting you." The scent of Alpha was getting closer, and Will's heart rate was spiking with every second. Mrs. Lecter's expression went from stunned to hurt to calmly confused as she spotted her son entering the foyer.

"Did Mads not tell you he had a twin?"

If this were a cartoon there would be a sound effect of screeching tires right about now. Will stopped trying to open the doorknob with his knee and turned slowly. A twin. Not Mads. And suddenly every difference between them was highlighted in slow motion: same accent but cold and clipped. Short, perfectly styled hair instead of Mads' longer looser locks in casually charming disarray. Eyes the same unusual shade but wholly devoid of humor and light. Same fascinating mouth but tightly compressed instead of warm and smiling. A patterned suit/shirt/tie combination that should *not* work, but seemed made to by sheer force of the man's elegance and indomitable will. Mads' worn jeans and soft sweaters would never don a man so completely in his own skin while wrapped in a three-piece suit. Under a subtle expensive cologne, only his scent was the same, though the leather was more polished and the forest all the darker for the moonlight straining to filter through.

But Will was supposed to be speaking right now. "Uh. Yes. He did. But I didn't know he was identical."

Mrs. Lecter loosened, settling a hand on Will's unladen shoulder. "Well of course, Shannon. That must have been jarring. Anyone with half a brain would be sensitive to *that*."

"Thank you, Mother," the twin stated in a calmly sardonic tone. "I am Dr. Lecter, Hannibal. It is nice to meet you." He extended a hand, and Will offered a pinky for him to shake... which he did, following a prompting glance from his mother. Unable to quite meet those hauntingly familiar eyes, Will noted a minute flare of the Alpha's nostrils, as though he was a predator scenting the air. "Though I wish it were under more pleasant circumstances."

Will's eyes once again cast over the high ceilings, the stunning artwork, the sumptuous furnishings visible through the numerous doorways leading further into the house, the strange inclusions of horn and bone amid rich fabrics and warm woods. "This is okay."

"I meant before the accident," Hannibal stated after a moment, slightly chastising him for the lapse. The omega's face crumpled into wrinkled unease, and his eyes hit the floor.

"Oh. Right. Of course." The omega's already alluring scent took on the piquant tang of cinnamon and roasted spice when he was upset; Hannibal found his mouth unexpectedly watering just as the smaller man's eyes hit him full-force. "Would you like to hold... your... niece?"

The omega offered the baby gently, despite Hannibal's sudden rigid discomfort over being handed a small child. The baby was placed in his arms over his mute protests, and he managed to not drop the girl despite an awkward hold. Alpha and infant regarded one another silently, his mother looking on beatifically as Jimmy moved to take the bags back, until Hannibal sought to restore his equilibrium.

"Fortunate for her, she looks nothing like us." From his peripherals, he was aware of matching looks of disapproval from the pair stood before him, and his mother wordlessly moved to reclaim the child, directing the other omega to follow her. Hannibal stood there calmly, hands clasped behind his back, sure he'd been in the right. Then Jimmy walked by with the bags and other things, clucking his tongue at the man in quiet 'I raised you better than that' admonishment, allowed because of his history with the family as well as the genuine affection Hannibal bore him - a truly rare gift offered to a number of people so small it could be counted on one hand with fingers to spare.

He stalked off to the study, fingers itching to sketch in his journal a while to relieve the sudden tension beneath his right scapula and the myokymia threatening in his left eye. In the back of his mind, he heard a voice distinctly whisper *Be careful, Dr. Lecter. Your Alpha is showing.*

Chapter End Notes

Myokmia- (from the Greek -mÿs meaning "muscle," and kÿm, or -kÿmos meaning "wave") His eye is starting to twitch.

Whenever we're in Hannibal's POV, he's likely to throw in medical or scientific names for things.

Next on the menu, one awkward family dinner.

Quick Bite

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

On tonight's menu, a healthy serving of awkward family interaction.

Chapter Notes

In this verse, since Hannibal and Mads were both younger, I'm putting them the same age as Father Brian (figure late 20s) and a decade older than Will.

A thing to bear in mind: from now on, whenever we're viewing the story from Will's POV, I'll use Will. If someone else is looking at, talking to or thinking about him, they'll use 'the omega' or Shannon. There are a few points coming up where this switches within a few sentences or less.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was nearing the dinner hour. With luck their newest addition would be making his appearance shortly but until then the Lecters were content to pass the time with a drink. Aperitif, always en vogue.

As Hannibal stood at the bar with the cocktail shaker blending his carefully measured libation, his mother entered the lounge, fresh as a lily and just as effortlessly beautiful in black and white striped Dior. She settled herself with a delicate sniff, feet clad in *peau de soie* slippers crossed at the slender ankle, and instantly launched into a cherishing dissertation on her beautiful grandchild and newly acquired daughter-in-law. Hannibal allowed it long enough to doctor a glass and pour out.

"Consider, Mother. Where did Mads find someone like that? Where could they *possibly* have met?"

He approached his mother on her reclining sofa with a tray containing a freshly mixed martini for himself and a tumbler of cool clear water for her. The various medications prescribed to her (the final doses of which would be taken with or after dinner) were not to be taken with alcohol, a reality his mother seemed determined whenever possible to ignore.

"What do you mean?"

"Well he is hardly in our..." He broke off, suddenly aware what the next word out of his mouth might sound like.

"Class?" Leave it to his mother to pull exactly what he wished to keep hidden to the fore.

"Frankly... yes." He bowed forward to present the tray a little nearer so she would not have to stretch, swiftly maneuvering the tray when her fingers went after his cocktail like a booze-seeking missile. "The *water*, mother." Resigned, she snatched the glass and Hannibal straightened, walking back to the bar to set the tray down. "I mean, you must admit, there is just a *little bit* of white trash around the edges, would you not say?" The noise his mother produced was suspiciously close to what the swine would refer to as an 'ugh' though of course they themselves were far too well-bred for such a thing.

"How did I ever raise such a snob?"

"It *is* a mystery, Mother." He took a long sip of his frigid martini and blithely spoke as he passed to the dining room. "Let's ask the servants."

Grace Lecter sprang up with an alacrity that belied the delicacy of her age and headed for the bar. She quickly dumped the water in her glass into a potted orchid and reached for the cocktail shaker, covering the telltale rattle of ice with a louder than normal retort.

"I demand that you at least give him a fair and sporting chance." The clear liquid looked enough like water pouring in.

"I apologize," Hannibal continued from the room beyond, in a tone that said he was doing anything but. "Does it sound as though I prejudged him?"

"Hmm. '*White trash*'? No, no." She replaced the cap to the shaker with a decisive tap of her palm and exited the room with her doctored drink.

One feathery brow smoothed into an arch approaching his hairline in an expression of pseudo innocence. "Is that considered a derogatory term?"

"I am serious, my darling." Her tone was nearly as icy as the libation he was attempting to savor, and the unexpected force in his mother's veiled command was threatening to sour it.

"By the gods... *Fine*. Perhaps he is a perfectly wonderful, down-to-earth little Omega. But what do we *really* know? Hmm? Nothing! Except that Mads supposedly picked him up and was bringing him home after a half decade abroad and incommunicado, expecting us to welcome them both into the fold with open arms." He slammed the last of his martini back like a common barfly and gritted his teeth against the refined burn traversing his esophagus. "Admit it, mother! Were he not already dead, you would be screaming your head off at him."

Her fingers tightened elegantly around the cut crystal, and her tone could've chipped diamond. "By the gods, you can be insensitive sometimes."

"Only sometimes?" She went to take a sip and he extracted the glass with surgical precision. "I must be slipping."

The little huff of aggravated defeat he heard behind him was less satisfactory than he had hoped.

The small assembly at the dinner table were nothing if not well-mannered. A delay of over a quarter hour while they waited the meal on their recent guest was passed with freezing politeness between the Lecters and determined attempts at lightening the oppressively civil atmosphere from their dining companion, Father Brian Zeller. The jovial beta was the only child of the former housekeeper, raised with the twins as a socializing influence. Grace Lecter had personally sponsored him through seminary and championed his appointment to a suitable post in the city. He was essentially family, and dined with them on occasion.

"You know what you need?" A voice preceded the omega himself arriving at table, and both Lecters perked up with interest at what the little one considered necessary in their home. "Some of those 'You are Here!' maps." Father Brian let out a muffled snort, and Grace looked similarly amused. Hannibal felt his face tighten at the uncouth suggestion, but schooled his expression to aloof neutrality by the time the omega joined them, his daughter cradled lovingly in his arms.

He took a moment to absorb the rich indigo wallpaper, the massive black wood dining table, the sparkling white table linen glowing under warm electric light, a centerpiece of fresh flowers and exotic fruit arranged in a ceramic bowl around gnarled twigs and what looked like a jawbone, the odd green wall that might be made of something growing and alive.

Everyone else took a moment to absorb the sight of him. Omegan beauty highlighted by the sconces, a finely featured face carved in skin pale as marble, interrupted with dark slashes of brow and huge sapphire eyes with hidden depths of emerald and a pert berry stain of a mouth. Riotous dark curls cascading almost to his shoulder, clipped back into a low ponytail. Fingertips peeking from the sharp-edged sleeves of a beta-tailored blouse in a verdurous green that played up his eyes, the androgynous structure suiting him well while still pronouncing his delicacy. Two buttons beneath the high collar were open, revealing a tease of clavicle and an inch or two of the graceful column of his throat, around which hung some manner of cord. Dark jeans tattooed with embroidery completed the ensemble, whose hems sat a few inches under the heels of his ever-present sneakers, though only Hannibal noticed.

From her spot at the table head, Grace directed him to the space on her right, directly across from her son. Introductions were made, though the omega already seemed to know the Father. *Jimmy's idea of taking his side, no doubt*, Hannibal thought with an unwelcome trace of acerbity.

They managed the soup and salad courses calmly enough, settling the baby in a plush basket beside Shannon as Grace and Father Brian regaled the omega with tales of the boys' childhood foibles. He laughed, a slightly rough sound like an unoiled gate, while Hannibal cringed inwardly and fought the urge to roll his eyes at the reminder of his all-too-human past. All was well until they were awaiting the main course and sides, whereupon Shannon reached over to neatly bisect a ball of salted cream butter - and promptly dunked the trailing edge of his sleeve into the thick sauce that had been brought out in advance of the meat.

"Oh no! Man, I'm so sorry," he said, clearly embarrassed as Mrs. Lecter dabbed at his sleeve with cooing reassurance. "The clothes don't quite fit. After the baby, I forgot I might lose a little..." He set his elbow to the tabletop and rotated his wrist to examine the damage.

"Height?" Hannibal offered in a bitingly civil tone, coolly wiping the corner of his mouth. The omega flicked a startled glance tinged with annoyance his way, and the little pat of butter he had collected on the edge of his knife hit the highly polished tabletop with a muted plop.

Silence reigned over the table a few painful seconds, until Father Brian cannonballed into the awkward void threatening to yawn wide in the conversation.

"A lot of Omegas prefer Beta clothing. It's... comforting, or something like that, right?" Shannon offered a small grateful smile and nodded. A set of tiny silk-covered toes connected with Hannibal's shin beneath the table and he recalled himself, forcing his lips into a convincing if predatory curve.

"Mother informs me I was perhaps a bit rude and unfriendly when first we met."

Shannon avoided the Alpha's eye as he spread the recovered butter with a laser focus Hannibal rarely saw outside a surgical theatre.

"You weren't *rude*," he managed under his breath.

"...Just unfriendly then? Oh good. I despise rudeness and that..." Tired from injecting a pleasantness he did not feel, he reached for the sobering influence of his wine. "That gives us something to build on."

"Don't worry about it," the Omega muttered again, making Hannibal strain to hear him. "Just keep it... professional."

Grace, in a burst of uncharacteristic optimism, suggested they could try socializing like adults. "Gods forbid, you could actually become friendly."

Shannon's eyes screamed his incredulity at the suggestion. "No offense, Dr. Lecter, but I don't find you that interesting."

Hannibal halted again, a neat piece of roll halfway to his lips. Their eyes met and locked a moment with a nearly audible click like magnets.

"You will."

Before the tension could swell again, servants arrived bearing silver salvers piled with food, and began moving around the table from Shannon's side. He collected a small serving of roast vegetables and fingerling potatoes, then attempted to pass the platter across the table to Father Brian. The servant resisted until Grace waved them off, resuming their circuit around the table after the Omega seemed to recognize his *faux pas*.

"Sorry about that," he said, blushing quite prettily in a manner Hannibal found unfairly alluring. "Dining's just... so much less formal in Denmark."

"Yes, everyone just eats pastry at every meal." His mother flashed him yet another *look* and smoothly transitioned to a safer topic.

"So. Florence must have been ideal for a wedding, Shannon."

"Huh?" The younger omega startled a little, setting the cut of flawlessly cooked beef he'd just selected onto his plate with a rasping clink of serving tong on china. The tray continued on its way and Shannon began toying with his fork to avoid eye contact. "Oh. Um. Yes. So... ahem... Italian."

"Tell us about the wedding," Grace urged.

Shannon paused in his careful dissection of the meat on his plate. "Well... it was beautiful," he replied with a soft smile.

When no elucidation was forthcoming, Hannibal gave in to a slightly sadistic urge to press. "Could you elaborate?"

Shannon instantly shot him a glare.

"Real beautiful." Those stormy eyes then turned to Grace, instantly calming, and Hannibal felt an irrational surge of annoyance, undercut with a nagging twinge of loss. "Right there in Florence, Italy. Which is... really beautiful, y'know? *Que bella*." The foreign language dripped off his tongue like crystallized honey, and he popped a forkful of food in his mouth, chewing with deliberation. Grace was regarding him with a gentle wistfulness, as though he had painted a full picture rather than a bare thumbnail sketch.

"I would have been there had he bothered to pick up the phone."

Recalling Hanne's story and feeling the need to protect Mads from even delicate censure, Will hastened to explain.

"Ohhh. Well... it ended up being sort of spur of the moment. We practically *eloped*... once we decided to... y'know... do that."

His mother's hand alighted on the other omega's wrist with the delicacy of a butterfly. "I do not blame you, dear. I think he simply did not think about it."

Hannibal watched as Shannon's expression softened further, undercutting his already striking beauty with a sweet tenderness wholly unfamiliar to the Alpha. He set his cutlery aside and turned his attention fully to the elder omega, cradling his chin in his palm.

"I know he didn't always think and that may have *looked* like thoughtlessness, but to me - and I know I knew him such a short time compared to all of you..." *Ain't that the freaking truth?* "To me, there was a kindness to his actions that was so much sweeter because it was so thoughtless. He was the one of the only people I'd ever met who was kind without a reason. Not because he wanted something, but just... *because*. You know?"

Hannibal's voice was soft and introspective, laced with a razor-thin edge of pain. "You understood him. I never did. I always assumed there would be time to... figure him out, know

him better."

An imperative beyond the mere biological urge to appease an Alpha made Will ache to soothe Hannibal, to spare him pain and see his beautiful uneven smile. And it would've scared the hell clean out of him if he'd realized what was going on.

"You know, he talked about you all the time." Hannibal incrementally straightened, and his face smoothed into a gentle '*oh really?*' expression, disbelieving but clearly trying to be appreciative of the effort. Will forged on. "He used to say 'we look just alike, that's why we have to act so different'."

The expression seized, clouded, then shattered. "I thought he didn't tell you we were identical."

Shannon froze and started, like an animal that realized a step too late it was in danger. "Uhh. He did. Of course he did! It's just... when I saw you it **completely** slipped my mind." Those small pale hands were fluttering like agitated doves.

"Of course it did, dear. And we understand," Grace concluded, pinning her son with a look that dared him to contradict her show of soothing support. She needn't have bothered. Hannibal Lecter was not stupid.

He was, however, very stubborn.

"But why lie about it?"

The Omega's eyes flashed wide and swiftly filled with tears, much to Hannibal's shock and horror. "I'm s-sorry," he breathed, gathering the sleeping child into his arms and rocking it in a self-comforting gesture. "It's just... when I saw *you*... I was so confused... and this *house*... I'm sorry, I- I have to lie down." The baby remained blissfully unaware of its parent's distress as he raced out of the room, tears glistening on his cheeks, trailing denim making uneven *flumps* against the carpeted hardwood.

"Shannon, wait!" Grace called after him. "Where are you going?"

"To my room..." A sob almost obscured the tag end of his reply. "If I can find it."

He was halfway up the stairs when she whirled on her son and threw down her napkin like a gauntlet, a dangerous glint in her eyes.

"Just what in the name of seven hells did you think you were doing?!"

"His answers were not consistent!"

"This is neither a psychiatric session nor a cross examination in court, Hannibal! The poor boy has been through hell!"

"He is covering *something* up. I mean look at him!" A Lithuanian expletive he had not used since university slipped the leash to express his disbelief. Recalling their company, he spat

out an acknowledgement that was at least half sincere. "Apologies, Father. But he is hiding something. I can smell it!"

"Hannibal?" His mother rose with a finesse worthy of her name and planted both hands firmly on the table, issuing challenge with her gold-edged glare. "*Knock it off.*" His mother had resorted to colloquial slang; he scented danger in the air. "He is Mads' widow and has just given birth to my grandchild *under* 200 tons of twisted metal. Now I do not care if he turns out to be a cannibalistic serial killer! I am going to help him all I can." She leveled a finger in his direction like a witch threatening a hex. "And if you do not start treating that nice boy with some respect, I will take you over my knee and spank you. And do not imagine for one minute that I cannot do it." She broke off, calming instantly, the thread of weighted humor delivered in the final sentence pulling tight around him like a noose. He turned to Jimmy who was standing by the sideboard with a water pitcher.

"Jimmy?" He implored softly. The kindly blond butler just let out a tiny snort.

"Hey, my money's on her."

Chapter End Notes

Yes I realize Hannibal is being a bit more rude than would strictly be in character for him, but we discussed it at length and he doesn't think he's being rude; he prefers the term "temporary selective hostility." He's hot and scares me a little, so I'm letting it slide. Kudos and comments always appreciated. You guys seem to actually be liking this. it's blowing my mind.

I'm Too Busy Being Antisocial

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

It ends up being a little too 'people-y' outside for Will's taste, and we get some insight into the Lecters.

Chapter Notes

Just a reminder: stuff from Will's POV says Will. Anyone else talking or thinking about him will use Shannon or 'the omega.'

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Following the demi-disaster that was the dinner party, Hannibal took himself back to his life in Baltimore and relative quiet reigned in the house... for 4 whole days before society intervened. The need to mourn was well understood, but so was the need to share and celebrate more joyous happenings. So Grace Lecter used her not inconsiderable clout and stature to pull together a christening in a mere 48 hours. It was, quite simply, an Event. 300 people who would not know the omega from Eve crammed the pews of Father Brian's church to get a glimpse of the latest Lecter heir.

Hannibal, stoic in a slate three-piece with blue on blue shirt and tie combination, watched as his mother guided the little omega through the ceremonial paces, aided by a smiling Father Brian. Shannon was attired in clean classy casual - hair pinned back, a snowy button down with subtle white embroidery under a forest green velvet jacket that hugged his torso before flaring to his knees, dark jeans rolled to avoid trips. The semi-terrified expression he'd worn through most of the service was even a little charming, as was the blush that appeared when he named the Lecters as godparents and handed his fidgety child over to Hannibal.

Then Maddie Leigh Lecter had the nerve to settle down, smile at him and try to gum the end of his tie. It was more adorable than it had a right to be, and he found himself almost resenting the little twist his lips had adopted as he stood looking into the impossibly blue orbs the child had inherited from her mother.

He was a charming little thing too, Hannibal mused to himself as he sauntered through the ground level of the house after the service - even if the Alpha still suspected something more was going on than that which initially met the eye. The object of his wayward thoughts suddenly appeared as though summoned, daughter snoozing adorably in his arms.

"Whoa! Hi!"

"Ah. You found the secret passageway. How... clever of you," Hannibal said, hands folding themselves behind his back in a deceptively casual pose.

"Oh... Is *that* what that is?" Shannon regarded the now seamless join of the door he'd just walked through where it blended perfectly into the paneled wall. "Thank the gods. I thought I was lost again."

"Yes. Well." Hannibal noted without intention the removal of the omega's outer layer, the pleasant softening effect its absence had on his overall appearance, the curls that now lay loose in delightful disarray about the hidden column of his graceful neck. The silence between them shivered like a cold beast breathing in the corner until Hannibal shattered the tension with surprisingly congenial small talk. "Are you ready for the party?"

The omega instantly paled, which was a feat in itself. "P... p-party?"

"Yes. We are having... a few people over to celebrate the christening. Mother must always have her little parties." Hannibal strode off in the direction of the French doors that led to the sloping lawns, leaving Shannon and his child to follow or not as they chose. All he heard was a soft response to no one in particular, as though the omega were reassuring himself.

"I guess I can handle a *few* people."

Oh, dear.

Hannibal almost felt sorry for him.

Almost.

This was **not** a few people. Will took one step past the doors and found himself staring down the fully loaded double barrels of a crowd. A veritable swarm of strangers milled about, sipping cocktails and nibbling hors d'oeuvres. He briefly wondered if he could outrun them, or maybe sneak back inside before anyone spotted him and tried to engage him in conversation. Dissection under the guise of civilized chatting. Ugh. He'd rather have his brain mapped without anesthesia.

Unfortunately Mrs. Lecter chose that moment to notice him and sweep in to usher him out on her arm, mindful of the baby now wide awake and absorbing everything with her solemn blue eyes.

She introduced him to friends and acquaintances of varying age and social status, trying to find a nice fit for him, daring anyone to challenge her sponsorship. Will tolerated it as long as he could, losing even the small defense of his daughter when Mrs. Lecter carried her off to show around and coo over.

Attempts at conversation were disastrous, as Will didn't know this so-and-so, didn't care about that scandal. A trio of bitchy betas had cornered him under the guise of a 'friendly' chat,

asking who did his hair and wherever had he gotten the "bold" idea to pair *that* watch with *those* shoes.

He reached for a passing tray of something sparkling and knocked a few crystal glasses over with the awkward attempt. Stifled laughter and undisguised scrutiny wore on him until he spotted Hannibal some distance away chatting with the stunning brunette hanging off his arm. His body language was tooled to indicate social nicety, not heady lust and undying affection, and Will took a moment's solace that the Alpha might be almost as miserable as he. Then their eyes met across the crowded lawn and Will's heart tripped over itself for a few beats like a newborn fawn. The Alpha started to move as though he might head over before the woman on his arm reeled him in with a dazzling smile, a flash of cleavage and a kiss to the cheek. She cast a look over Will like a trapping net and let out a brittle-sounding laugh following whatever observation she was whispering in Hannibal's ear.

Jaw setting into a tight teeth-aching grind, Will made a beeline for his non-mother-in-law, retrieved Maddie and stormed into the house, leaving a trail of cinnamon-scented fury in his wake.

And Will was furious. He felt like a fool, like a hick. He paced up and down the thick carpet, the awe he'd felt when he first arrived and saw the lavishly decorated rooms just for him nowhere in sight.

He wanted to scream; he couldn't, given the horde of socialites less than 50 yards from his windows. He wanted to throw something; he didn't dare, as even the knickknacks in the room were antique heirlooms. People with this much money just didn't have tchotchkes.

He settled for collapsing onto the thick coverlet, dropping his head into his hands, plowing his fingers through his ragged curls and giving a firm yank of frustration. They were too long, his clothes didn't fit, everything was wrong. *He* was wrong. *He* didn't fit.

Just as the telltale prickle began in his nose, there was a knock and Mrs. Lecter appeared in the doorway, something akin to an apologetic expression on her face.

Will drew a deep breath and straightened up, pinning a smile on his face.

"Mother Lecter, hello." The elder omega's own small smile developed a rueful twist.

"Hmm. That was what I called *my* mother-in-law when I met her as a young bride. She seemed so cold and distant."

"What did you end up calling her?" Will asked, suddenly curious.

"Mother Lecter. She *was* cold and distant."

"Oh," he replied, fighting a giggle.

Mrs. Lecter stepped into the room and gazed down at Maddie, who was propped up against hand-embroidered pillows in her bassinet and reaching for the plushy dog mobile as it spun

over her head. Then she settled on the long blue sofa in front of the fireplace and gestured Will over to sit beside her. He haltingly complied.

"I had these brought out to embarrass Mads with during your visit."

3 beautiful leatherbound albums he had assumed were encyclopedias or a showy matched set of novels were stacked on a side table. Mrs. Lecter drew the top book off the stack and began flipping the pages. Will caught glimpses of the boys as baby twins, trying to suss out which was which. They were held up by their parents as they balanced on their toes on the front lawn, then shown climbing Jimmy like a playground device, then riding bikes over the massive drive. 1st, 3rd and 5th birthdays showed matching cake-smeared smiling faces, while their 10th showed one in a tailored suit as the other posed in jeans and bare feet, using their father's arm as a balance bar. Despite the miniature carbon copy gazing up at him from his right, the older man's eyes were fondly drawn to the boy hanging on his left.

Another book opened with a shot of the boys as early teenagers, arms slung around one another as they hung off the side of an indoor pool, the fraternal closeness evident. By the time they were graduating high school (Hannibal with a notable abundance of ribbons and stoles around his shoulders, Mads with his gown unzipped to show off a dance academy shirt and board shorts) the start of the cracks between them were subtle but visible. Fewer shots existed of the twins together; now they were either solitary or surrounded with people as they crafted new spheres to move through.

Hannibal attended science camps and culinary school and drawing class. Here he posed in a pristine white coat over a lab experiment, there smugly holding up beautifully crafted plates of food or solemnly displaying charcoal sketches that showed breathtaking promise. Will's heart squeezed at a candid of him in a museum, a strange peace in his features and sunlight illuminating his hair as he looked up.

By contrast, Mads always seemed to be in motion. Dance classes and fun group shots and acrobatics, performance shots of him leaping far above a stage or mid-flip or hanging upside-down from aerial silks like a mischievous angel. A photo of him vaulting one-handed over a kitchen island at a party was so perfectly timed Will half-expected it to start moving and show him landing neatly on the other side with fluid gymnastic grace.

"Now Mads was especially embarrassed by this one of him naked. Except for the cowboy hat and holster." Will tactfully averted his eyes and tried not to blush. She elegantly rolled her shoulder, seeming not to notice. "Still, one is only in college once, I suppose."

A few more pages turned, a few more glimpses were given into the light & shadow history of this family and she suddenly clapped the book shut and set them both aside. Her mouth opened, closed, pursed, then opened again as she turned to look at Will, one tiny hand resting gently atop his.

"I do not have the strength to cry anymore." The stark honesty in the quiet statement almost hurt Will to hear, but he determined to return her open gaze and frankness, turning his hand and giving hers a small squeeze of solidarity.

"Neither do I." *Though for very different reasons.* A beat lingered between them, as his sort-of mother-in-law tipped her head and considered whatever it was she saw in the depths of his soul.

"Call me Grace," she offered softly.

"Grace," Will breathed, testing the weight and flavor on his tongue. "Is that where Hannibal's name came from?"

The delighted surprise in her vibrant eyes melted away the few fine lines residing in the corners and took about a decade off her already indeterminate age. "Not many would catch that. Yes, it is. Mikkell named Mads after his brother and himself - Mads Mikkelsen Lecter - and I named Hannibal, my little grace of Ba'al." She regarded him closely, and Will fought the urge to squirm. "You see the world in a different way than most, don't you, Shannon?"

Shrugging in lieu of a vocal response, Will plucked at his jeans again and fidgeted with a button on his overlong sleeve. "Doesn't help me fit in."

"Not that you are required to fit in, my dear, but who said you do not?"

Will jerked his chin towards the window to indicate the assembly that lay beyond. "Everyone out there. They were all thinking it. I could... tell."

"And why should you care what people think?" The answer seemed of great import to the elder omega.

"Because!" Will exploded, then instantly quieted, checking to make sure Maddie wasn't about to cry before turning his gaze back to Grace. "Because... you're Mads' family, and... I don't want to reflect badly on you."

Grace's voice was surprisingly gentle. "Whatever made you think you were?"

"Grace..." His voice was a bemused plea. His hands shot out - too-long sleeves nearly smothering his fingers, beta cut appealing but not quite right for him - before sweeping down him in a gesture that directed her eyes to the rolled cuffs of his jeans and the battered state of his perpetual sneakers. "Look at me!"

"I *am* looking at you. And you are fine."

Tamping down the urge to roll his eyes, Will pushed to his feet and tromped over to the standing mirror in the next room. He glared at his reflection, aware of the misery clearly visible on his face.

"This? *This* is fine?"

Grace followed him, wavering between confirmation and correction, little touches and comments as she adjusted this or suggested that. Then her eyes met Will's in the silvered surface and she allowed a momentary flicker of 'appropriately chastened' to subdue her expression.

"I apologize. I never had a daughter."

Will's heart melted a little. "It's okay. I barely had a mother." He watched as a calculating flash lit in her eyes like summer lightning, and couldn't decide if he was scared by it or not.

"Come to my room after breakfast Monday, will you?" Will gave a hesitant nod. "I have an idea."

Chapter End Notes

If you're familiar with the movie, you know the photo album scene happened when Connie/Patricia first arrives at the estate but I didn't like it there, so I blended it with the party aftermath.

Accentuate the Positive

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Will gets a makeover and an Alpha unexpectedly thrown in his path.

Chapter Notes

Took like 5 rewrites to get the description of Hannibal's office to my liking. Still don't love it but you guys all know what it looks like.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Monday morning saw Will reluctantly keeping his promise to let Grace get her hands on him and try to change what he saw. After handing Maddie off to a gleeful maid named Beverly, the elder Omega set Will beside her in the car and directed Jimmy to her salon in town. It was an establishment that radiated class, from the uniformed stylists and hammered chrome sconces to the cappuccinos and petit fours on plates that set off the Mediterranean blue tile floor. The staff made appropriate fuss over Will, shampooing his locks with organic lather and conditioning with luster-promoting product, trimming his raggedy curls into a bold shorter style that suited his bone structure and showed off his eyes.

Hair dealt with, they went for manicures and moisturizing facials, the bevy of beta consultants all cooing over his beautiful skin and healthy (if slightly chewed) nails. That done, Grace took him to a couturier who dressed him head to toe and all points in between with well-fitting, Omegan-tailored clothes - though he firmly kept the man out of the changing room, thank you very much. He stood in front of the 3-sided mirror and for the first time in a long time really liked what he was looking at. He was clad in a suit of sorts, but definitely pleasure not business. A sort of refined omega twist on the "ladies who lunch" vibe, though it would work in a range of scenarios. The rich blue brought out his eyes, the cut showed off his figure and the swanlike grace of his neck, the quality made him seem a little mature, and the overall softer image it projected set him at ease. Checking himself over in the mirror with strange fascination, Will had to admit he looked pretty good. Even if Grace was spending way too much just to make him presentable. Outfit after outfit was acquired and packed up, making sure most could be mixed and matched to suit, and finally Will convinced her enough was enough.

He helped Jimmy pack the trunk, then settled in beside Grace, finally allowing himself a sigh of relief. Thinking they were heading home, Will wasn't paying much attention until the car

rolled to a stop in a quiet commercial district. He looked at the building in confusion before registering the sign that stood out against a flawless rhododendron hedge.

Hannibal Lecter, M.D., Psy. D.

Psychiatric Consultation

The painted wood of the sign was the pale cream of a formal invitation, the lettering all fluid script in deep red bordered in pinstripe-thin black. Unexpectedly, Will thought of trailing drips of blood sliding down a sink basin; he shook his head like an etch-a-sketch to clear the gruesome flash.

"What are we-" But Grace had already taken Jimmy's hand and was stepping out, leaving Will no choice but to follow.

"Come along, dear."

He meekly trailed after Grace as she swept past the unoccupied reception area and burst (if such an elegant entrance could be considered bursting) into Hannibal's office. And by the gods, what an office. Will's eyes absorbed every detail like a starving man at a feast.

Huge windows set into the linen-colored far wall were spared too much revelation by rolling shades flanked with heavy drapes striped in red and grey. An angular Freudian couch the color of a murky pond sat before them on a large area rug, torn between invitation and intimidation. Another sofa - this one plushly upholstered in powder blue fabric that shimmered like Versailles in candlelight - sat perpendicular to the first against a blood red accent wall. An impressively sleek open-front wood desk most CEOs would get hard over stood on a matching rug facing the windows, covered in neat stacks of papers and color-coded folders and writing implements lined up with military precision. On the bare chalky floor of the no-man's land between the carpeting was a facing pair of squashy retro-flavor chairs in grey leather, the sort you could sink back into or perch on the edge of. Heavy wood furniture stained to match the desk hunkered like sullen sentries around the room, holding books. Framed artwork and neat sketches dotted the walls - a museum of Hannibal's tastes from Asian to anatomical, though Will couldn't make out more than faint impressions of most of them from the door. A small brass stag stood on a pedestal to his left, nobly rigid but carved with a hint of motion as though it would not hesitate to impale hapless interlopers on its rack and hoist them high as a warning prize if its domain were threatened. There was an honest-to-goodness dark marble fireplace that yawned behind Hannibal's desk like the mouth of Hell, ostensibly providing warmth on cool autumn evenings and frigid winter's nights. A ladder dared the unworthy to risk the climb up to a mezzanine level which wrapped around 3/4s of the room holding floor to ceiling bookshelves crammed with textbooks and hardcover periodicals and blackbound volumes that Will somehow knew would contain handwriting, neat bands of notation and diagrams and impressions and dissections of the minds that sought to be under the guiding hand of the Alpha psychiatrist.

It was a space of someone's design to make one open up and confess their darkest secrets, via submission or a sense of security or the subtle seduction of relief, and Will worried at his odds of resistance with repeated exposure.

While the omega had been absorbing his surroundings, Hannibal looked up from the hushed conference he was having with the icily beautiful woman by his desk, a slight twitch in the corner of his mouth the only indicator of his surprise.

Before he could manage a word, Grace Lecter had crossed the small span between them, focus firmly on the woman at his side.

"Bedelia, my angel. How are you?" Grace presented her cheek to the lovely Alpha, who smiled and inclined her body to press a markless kiss to the smooth skin.

"Very well, Mrs. Lecter. And yourself?" The woman's voice was low and smooth and cool, like a glass of iced lemonade on a summer day... if one had doctored it with a splash of vodka first.

"Oh, well as ever. I shall outlive the lot. And hello to you too, my darling." Turning to her son, she presented the other cheek for similar treatment, which he offered with appropriate deference.

"Mother. What brings you by?"

"Well we were just out and..." She suddenly blinked at the empty space beside her and cast a sharp look around, beckoning to the young man solemnly fidgeting at the threshold. "Come in, my sweet." He did so with admirable reluctance.

Hannibal turned, finally locating the source of the warm sweetness he'd detected on his mother, and noted the vast improvement in the omega's looks with raised brows. The shortened hair, the tease of throat, the buffed nails, the delicately scented hand cream, the fitted suit, the rich brown leather boots. All of it complimented the wearer and presented a very pleasing picture of confident maturity tempered with innocent charm. It was much to Hannibal's liking.

Perhaps a little too much.

"Hello, Doctor Lecter." Gods above, but even the young Omega's *voice* had grown more self-assured.

"Shannon."

They might've gone on regarding one another indefinitely but his mother (by virtue of being herself) drew his attention again as she walked to one of his chairs and arranged herself on the edge, knees together, ankles elegantly crossed.

"Are you free for lunch?" Hannibal's eyes met Bedelia's, who wordlessly indicated that he was. He barely suppressed a groan, trepidation filling him like a viscous liquid, though he

could not wholly say why. Before he could reply either way, his mother continued. "Well you are not now. I want you to take Shannon out and show him around the city."

His extreme empathy notwithstanding, if there was one thing Will was sure of, it was that Hannibal Lecter definitely did not want to take him to lunch and play tour guide. He managed not to trip over his toes as he moved to stand by Grace, feeling the eyes of both Alphas studying his back with varying degrees of interest.

"Oh, Grace, listen. He doesn't want to. I'll just go home with you."

"Ahh, but I am not *going* home, my sweet. And you..." She rose gracefully, took Will's hands and held them out, displaying him gently. "Are dressed to go out. So Hannibal, take him out. Somewhere nice."

With a kiss pressed to Will's cheek and another blown to the Alphas in the room, Grace departed, leaving nothing in her wake but stony silence and a whispering trace of her perfume. Will watched as long as he could, even after there was nothing to see. Bedelia excused herself from the room as well, and then there were two.

Hannibal was suddenly close, at his left shoulder. Will tried to calm himself with a slow steady draw of breath... only to hear as much as feel the Doctor do the same.

"Did... you just... *smell* me?" He looked up as he turned and their eyes met, and held.

Why was eye contact not hard to maintain with this man? It should've been impossible - an Alpha, basically a stranger, definitely a threat. But he'd visually connected more with Hannibal in the last week than he had during his entire relationship with Matt. It didn't make sense... except that when he looked into Hannibal's eyes it was as much about what he *didn't* see as what he did. Of course he saw Hannibal as he could see almost anyone. Could understand in flashes the core, the heart, the dark recesses of the person's soul. In Matt and Chill, it was weakness and a bitter desperation to hide it - though in Matt there was also blood in the water and an addict's craving for respect. In certain clients, truly dangerous people, he saw darkness - boxes of pitch-black secrets buried under bloodstained floorboards. But when he looked into *Hannibal's* eyes? Amid the elegant isolation and flashes of lust and tender appreciation of the beautiful and rare... inexplicably, Will saw himself.

"Difficult to avoid."

What? Oh. Right. The scenting.

Will swallowed, his voice reverently quiet. "And why is that?"

"You smell... different. Better, if I may be so bold. That entrancing scent of yours is so frequently masked with that unfortunate... well, not aftershave. I don't believe I can recall ever seeing a face less in need of a razor than yours. But in other hands it would be and as such it does not suit you. It smells as though there should be a ship on the bottle."

Will squared his shoulders and edged up his chin a defiant inch. "It was my dad's. It's the last thing I have of his." *Now.*

Hannibal had the good grace to flinch at the *faux pas*. "My apologies. That was... thoughtless." And Will knew to the core that he meant it, despite the dent his ego would've taken to say so.

"Yeah. Well. S'alright." His gaze dropped to Hannibal's lips as a blush heated his cheeks. "Listen. If you don't want to do this, and I *really* think you don't..." The corner of the Alpha's mouth twitched. "I can just catch a cab." Hannibal's stare was like a palpable touch, enticing the omega's eyes to return to his. When they did, something light - small but undeniable in its presence - sparked deep within those orbs, more maroon today than amber. Drying blood over ancient stone.

"I appreciate the offer, but believe me - I would never hear the end of it." He collected his jacket, secured the office and informed Bedelia he was leaving for lunch. As he gestured Will out the main door ahead of him, the omega couldn't resist a playful jibe.

"It's nice to see a grown man still afraid of his mommy."

The Alpha actually rolled his eyes, affectionate though it was. "Take my word. She has possessed the means to frighten since she took away my Operation game when I was 6."

Chapter End Notes

Next up, Hannibal shows Will around the city.

Memory Lane and All Points North...

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Hannibal shows Will around the city, and they talk as they walk...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hannibal chauffeured the omega in his beloved Bentley, selecting a lot downtown to secure his vehicle. They walked through the town talking, Hannibal pointing out the sights and opening up to Will to the surprise of them both. Emboldened, the omega asked what had happened between the brothers.

"My father indulged Mads in his... artistic pursuits, but always expected us to follow in his footsteps, assume some measure in the family practice. I specialized in surgery as well as psychiatrics, Mads went in for orthopaedics and sports medicine around his dance and acro classes." Will sensed the weight of dedication in such an educational pursuit, the mantle of expectation laid on the twins' shoulders like a yoke, and a niggling itch of impending dread started at the base of his spine. Knowing in advance of a story that something had not ended well did not make the listening any easier. "So the time arrived, a big important meeting of the clinic board where Father was going to officially pass the torch to both of us. We were standing in the hallway waiting for our cue to enter, and without warning Mads goes "Vent et øjeblik!" And he turned and walked out."

"And?" Will prompted.

"And he did not return!" Hannibal sighed, the exhalation seeming to come from his soul. The tighter his brow furrowed, the more Will's fingers itched to soothe and smooth it down.

"Three months later, I received a postcard from Copenhagen. It said 'how did it go, brother?'"

"Sounds like you're still mad at him."

"No," the Alpha demurred. "Not mad, per se. Merely... resigned. It became clear when we were still quite young that Mads was very much his own person. I have never minded following in the footsteps laid out by our father, but it did sting at the time that I was left to bear the responsibility on my own. He slipped the trap and was allowed to live free from the burden of such obligation."

The need to defend the kindly and departed twin rose in Will again. "But he didn't always. He got somebody pregnant and married them. That's more than a lot of others might do in that position."

Hannibal regarded him with a narrowing gaze of consideration, leaving him with the sensation of being flayed with a razor sharp scalpel. "And that somebody... would be... *you*. Correct?"

"Yeah," Will agreed halfheartedly, the recent confidence of his gaze faltering. "Sure." His eyes flitted like a sparrow needed a place to land. Spying a vendor, he started walking over. "Hey. You hungry?"

"Ah yes. I am supposed to treat you to lunch after all." He eyed the artisanal menu with caution before directing his attention to the aproned man already awaiting their order. "Good afternoon. May we see the wine list?" Will giggled before he could stop himself. He ordered a chicken and asiago sausage on a wheat roll with apple chutney, while Hannibal opted for a sage and onion pretzel with stone ground mustard dip.

They took their leave and wandered, no real destination in mind, content to walk as long as their feet didn't stray too far from the pay lot housing Hannibal's Bentley. The beta attendants didn't seem the sort to pull a Ferris Bueller with the car, terrified as they'd looked after Hannibal left them with strict instructions and a muffled growl. They'd probably get back to find it had been washed, waxed and detailed at no extra charge.

As they walked across the Hanover Street Bridge, Will noted a small blob of mustard in the corner of Hannibal's mouth. Stepping into the Alpha's path to halt him, Will tenderly cleaned the spot with a napkin and a soft smile... which was returned once Hannibal realized what he was doing.

"Dare I ask how long that has been there?"

"Actually," Will teased, "It's been there since I met you."

A strangely light expression overtook Hannibal's features - a rueful playfulness that made him seem Will's age. "I suppose I must look rather silly."

Eyes met without hesitation, Will tipped his head and regarded the Alpha carefully, unaware of the exposure of the smooth curve of his neck afforded by the movement. "I think you could use a little silly in your life, Doctor Lecter."

Something bloomed in the depths of the Alpha's gaze that Will felt the echo of resonating within his soul. "I think we have arrived at a point where you can call me Hannibal."

Will's eyes flashed wide, pupils contracting then dilating like ink spilled in the ocean. He couldn't look away. He didn't want to. The moment stretched, shivering like a line of spider's silk. Hannibal's hand suddenly appeared at the fringe of Will's peripheral and he straightened with a muted gasp, shattering the moment like a teacup dashed to a stone floor.

"Uhhh... shouldn't you be getting back?"

Hannibal's fingers curled in on themselves in a parody of a fist before he hid whatever unreadable thing was lurking behind his honeyed gaze by consulting his watch for the time.

"Actually, by virtue of the charm of your company I have... I believe the term is "blown off" my afternoon appointments. Bedelia will have rescheduled by now. If you were not averse... perhaps we could walk around some more?" It was a fair enough compromise, offered with an out. Will's lips parted, but produced no reply, sweetly startled by the scant trace of doubt he could detect in the Alpha's tone. "Or... you are too tired - I must have fatigued you with such a trek. Allow me to retrieve the car and-" He broke off at the light touch of the omega's hand on his elbow, warm even through the layers of fabric separating their skins.

"I'm not at all... averse. Just... hold on." Stepping to the sidewalk's interior, he tucked his hand in the crook of Hannibal's arm, letting his thumb brush the man's cloth-wrapped bicep. "Let's go." A nearly audible gulp was the prelude to a shy upturn of his lips. "*Hannibal*."

They continued to walk and talk, of everything and nothing in particular. Hannibal seemed to thaw more with every step, sharing childhood memories that made Will laugh and only occasionally want to cry. They fell into silence following a bittersweet recollection of the boys learning American history from Jimmy, a reminder of both their once close relationship and their often distant father. His fingers were getting that damned itch again.

Will dragged his eyes from Hannibal's solemn profile long enough to notice the display cases in a shop across the street.

"Oh. Can we?" Hannibal's eyes followed his point. "It's just... my mom." The omega stuck a thumb under the leather cord and tugged it out from under his shirt, revealing the oval locket dangling there. He stared at it a moment, absently caressing the smooth silver with the pad of his thumb. "Well, and Mads now, too. It was all that was left after... the accident."

A strange flood of emotion coursed through the Alpha at the expression on Shannon's face at the mention of his brother. It was genuine and sincere and gave him a small scald of shame at his previous doubts.

"Of course," Hannibal agreed, placing a hand at the small of Shannon's back as they checked for traffic and walked across. Gallantly holding the door open, he willed himself not to react to the delicate hit of scent that suffused his nostrils as the omega scurried inside.

They were immediately set upon by Mr. Gideon, a charming Beta who pressed kisses to the back of the omega's hand and kept him tucked close as he showed off his wares. Setting him down on a high stool while his assistant brought them flutes of fresh-squeezed orange juice with pomegranate sugar on the rims, Mr. Gideon slid behind his counter and produced chain after chain like a magician. Trying this length or that style, Will finally settled on a 20 inch platinum rope, the classic style complimenting the scrollwork engraving on the locket, the weight sturdy without being oppressive or ostentatious. Mr. Gideon took the chain and locket to the back for a final buff and polish, and presented them with a grin that could only be called cheeky before writing up the bill.

Will's fingers fumbled with the tiny clasp until large warm ones covered his own. "Allow me." He started to say... *something* against it, but eventually surrendered and let go, lacing his fingers together in his lap to suppress the sudden tingle he felt in each digit. It was the nimble-fingered work of a moment for the Alpha, whose hands settled on Will's shoulders in

a phantom-light squeeze before letting go... leaving Will trembling against a strange sense of loss.

"Do you like it?" The question left Will blinking until he realized the Alpha was talking about the chain that now hung cool against his skin. *Get a freaking grip, Graham.*

"It's beautiful. But it's so expensive," he breathed, dropping his voice to a reverent hush, as though money was not something discussed in polite company. And really it wasn't, but Hannibal couldn't bring himself to mind.

"Didn't Mother set you up with a checking account?"

The omega's eyes circuited in an affectionate roll. "Yes but she didn't even ask me! She just shoves this checkbook at me and says 'here!' like that's all there is to it." Granted, Hannibal was quite aware that to his mother, that *was* all there was to it. The word was given, the deed done and then the matter would be considered closed. He'd long since gotten used to it; the omega's reaction was almost refreshing in its naivete.

"Well, then." Hannibal produced a fountain pen from his coat pocket, uncapped it and handed it over. "By all means, write a check. It will be your first. I shall be glad I was here for it." Shannon was looking at the pen in his long elegant fingers, and swallowed hard before capturing it in his own. The pads of their fingertips kissed and - why had he termed it thus? *Kindly take hold of yourself, Lecter. Damnation, you're an Alpha, not some twitterpated schoolgirl.*

"O-o-okay."

A patiently waiting (if patently curious) Mr. Gideon presented him with a small box to keep the chain in and a bill. Will dug out the checkbook and started to fill in the pertinent information. When he got to the signature though, he smiled up at Hannibal, penning his name by rote, tearing the check out and letting Mr. Gideon get his fingers on it before he realized his mistake.

Will Graham was printed in neat looping cursive, plain as day in bold black ink. *SHIT.*

He grabbed it back with a flustered "Darn it!" and began to reduce the paper to tiny shredded flakes. "I... wrote the wrong date," he gave by way of explanation for the bizarre move. "Lemme write another one." Mr. Gideon gave him an indulgent smile and a 'by all means' gesture, and the omega looked up at Hannibal with a plausible 'what're ya gonna do?' expression before stuffing the confetti of the former check in his pocket and setting pen to paper once more.

For his part Hannibal said nothing, letting his Zygomaticus Major and Minor twist into a convincing facsimile of a smile as he mused to himself. *What will one do, indeed?*

Vent et øjeblik! - Danish for 'wait a minute!'

Up next, another dose of conversation between our budding Hannigram...

Catharsis & Therapeutic Tactility

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#).

Chapter Summary

The discourse between Will and Hannibal continues... and ends somewhere wholly unexpected.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Another hour of sightseeing later, Hannibal escorted the Omega back to the car and pointed them in the direction of the family home. The sky had been threatening the last few hours, a slightly overcast afternoon growing worryingly dark before the typical hour of evening, and Shannon wanted to get back to check on Maddie. They swung like a pendulum between easy conversation and companionable silence on the drive, Hannibal trying to focus on the road instead of Shannon's quiet contemplation beside him or the strange occurrence at the shop that they were apparently *not* talking about. As they wound up the drive, Hannibal's sharp eye spotted the Rolls being polished in the converted carriage house before being tucked in for the night, and so drove and parked under the stone cover of the entrance. Shannon made to bolt but a soft hand on his bicep halted his flight, allowing the Alpha time to exit, pocket his keys and open the door for his guest.

Not a soul was to be seen as they made their way through the ground floor, only stopping in a downstairs sitting room at the sight of a baby monitor on the chiffonier behind the sofa. It was on, and both listened, managing to catch the faint whuffle of breath over the line due to their superior hearing.

"Two patterns," Hannibal concluded.

"And they're both asleep from the sound of it," the omega agreed, exhalation coming as a soft sigh that struck the Alpha's ear like a glancing blow.

"Are you alright?" He detected no evidence of distress or discomfort, despite the unsettled feeling the sound had left him with.

"Hm? Oh. Yeah. I'm... fine." *Hmm... Thorough distraction, flattened tone, unfocused stare disallowing eye contact.*

"And which of us, if I may ask, are you attempting to convince?" The omega startled a little, brow folding itself into a worried furrow, finger unconsciously plucking at the platinum chain like a guitar string. Pizzicato anxiety. Then he breathed out a quietly amused huff, and left off the chain to drive his fingers through his shortened curls.

"Sorry. Not... entirely sure where my head went just then. Maybe I'm still just straddling that line to the past." His hand dropped to his side before swinging back up and indicating something over Hannibal's shoulder. He twisted his neck to glance that way and spied a framed photograph of him and his twin - one of the last taken before Mads' exodus. Unbidden, his body carried through the momentum and executed an about face, feet carrying him to the display, hand reaching with imperceptible pause to pick up the frame for closer examination.

He remembered this day. A graduation party at an upscale nightclub in Baltimore, more of Mads' overlapping social circles than his, but still ripe with the potential for diversion. After almost 2 hours apart, they'd reconnected for a minute on the carpeted lower level, Mads asking if Hannibal was having any fun. Unable to answer fully in the affirmative, Hannibal had mentioned the impending takeover, the day they both knew was coming sure as the tide, but his twin hadn't wanted to talk about it. Pressing a drink into his brother's palm, he'd wrapped a hand around the back of his neck and pulled him close enough to murmur in his ear to lighten up for the night; there was always time to be serious later.

Stepping out from the fraternal hold Hannibal had ended up in a perpendicular stance, trying to pass the drink to his brother, who simply rested a hand over the top and pushed it back down. It had been Hannibal who'd noticed the shutterfly leveling her camera at them like a sniper rifle, and his eyes and expression were trapped in the nebulous neither-zone midway between a few conflicting reactions. His lips held neither smile nor sneer, his eyes were neither wide with delight nor narrowed in warning. Mads' effortlessly beautiful features in three-quarter profile were fixed on the matching physiognomy of his brother, and the shot was somehow arresting in its frank and candid capture of the twins' unique interpersonal dynamic. *Worth every syllable of the 1000 words rendered unspoken.*

The girl had made sure Mads got a copy and good son he was, he'd had it framed and gifted it to their mother, who proudly displayed it beside a shaped onyx award she'd been given for civic donation. It oddly suited the image, and highlighted the wildly divergent styles of coordinating shades of black the pair wore in the photo.

"Mes visada galime būti rimti vėliau."

"What's that mean?"

"We can always be serious later. A motto of sorts for my brother," Hannibal answered as he carefully set the photo back in its place.

"You miss him."

"Naturligt." He turned his head to find the omega beside his shoulder, a strange echo of the pose he and Mads held in the photograph. A swallow negated the urge to clear his throat. "Do not you?"

Shannon blinked in a manner close to a flinch, and left his eyes wide and steady on Hannibal's. "Of course I do. I just... hate that any time I open myself up, any time I let myself... I-love someone, I lose them. They're... taken away from me. My parents and..." His hand landed on the locket in emphasis. *Except Mads wasn't mine to lose. And I didn't love*

Matt and he didn't really love me. Still... "It just doesn't seem fair. Life's hard enough as it is. Can't the gods be a little nicer?"

"In that they grant us our happiness, they must create balance in the universe by taking from us too. Though I often wonder if they do not like it, just a little."

"What? Taking things from us?" The omega stepped into further alignment with the sage Alpha, finding himself nearly face to face as Hannibal inclined his head slightly to the side in noncommittal confirmation.

"The things they take. The manner in which they do so. If a human stripped another human thus, we would call it murder - or at the least manslaughter. Yet *they* take with impunity. They kill and we accept, railing if we will about the unfairness of the loss but never questioning for an instant their right to deprive us."

A smooth roll of Shannon's shoulder shifted the fabric of his suit slightly offside. "The gods provideth, the gods removeth from the hand of man."

"So we are taught. But they do it all the time. Perhaps it feels good to them. And we are created in their image, so perhaps it would feel good to us," he mused, at least half to himself.

"I don't... think I could ever just... kill someone." His arms crossed themselves tightly over his torso, almost granting himself a hug against the thought. Hannibal inclined his body a little into the omega's bubble, unmindful of the possessive slant to the posture.

"You are an Omega, the best of all possible worlds- the ability to create life and the strength to defend it. My mother stands smaller than you, yet I have known full-blood Alphas to back down in her presence. It is a beautiful and terrible thing. A rare gift, Shannon, if only you would accept it. Embrace your deepest nature."

A moue of disbelieving amusement appeared on Shannon's lips. "You're saying I need to kill someone to truly be myself?"

Hannibal's own mouth quirked. "No. I would never. It is against... many laws, social and otherwise. I merely want you to admit to yourself that if it came to it, you could. You would allow yourself to defend that which you hold most precious in this world."

Will pondered that a moment and silently acknowledged that yes, if anything ever threatened his child, his family, he'd fight tooth and nail to safeguard and shield - even to the point of death.. be it the threat's or his own.

"I... concede your point." His eyes met Hannibal's again, locking in place like magnets finding their mates. Something unreadable flashed through the Alpha's golden gaze like heat lightning, gone before he could be sure it had even really been there in the first place... except for the faint glow curling low in the pit of his stomach in response.

"Good."

Hoo, boy. And just where the hell did that tone come from? "Be careful, Dr. Lecter," Will teased before he could think better of it, unaware of the soft dilation of his pupils and the calculating notice the other man gave the phenomenon. "Your Alpha is showing."

This was getting dangerous, the situation threatening to slide from the grip of his control. *Gods damn, pull yourself together, Lecter. He likely teased your brother thus.* The thought was sufficiently sobering and the rising corner of his mouth dropped to a zero degree. Straightening into a rigid line that granted him meager distance from the vexing Omega before him, Hannibal tamped down the inconvenient emotions being stirred up within him.

"Yes. Well." He applied surgical focus on the precise angle of his cufflink. "We are not all of us so fortunate in our natures as my twin."

The omega was silent a moment, then agreed in a voice soft with understanding. "He *was* a very lucky guy. He had you for a brother."

"That is *not*-" *No, Hannibal. Do not look. You will lose yourself within those unfathomable depths.* "For Mads, life was... uncomplicated. He never had any problems because he did not *wish* to have any. And the remarkable and very envious thing about it is that it worked. For **him**, it worked. Always. Until... until it did not."

Hannibal was standing like a masterclass in posture, and Will couldn't help but look up. And up. And *up* at the impossibly tall Alpha unwittingly declaring his deep need for comfort that Will desperately wanted to provide. Even when they took a clarifying step apart, Will still found his chin tilted up a fraction, unconsciously enticing with the promise of bared throat.

Hannibal, however, was entirely *too* conscious of it... and the effect it was having on very disparate portions of his anatomy. His fingers itched to touch the satiny looking skin on offer, his lips tingled with an urge to map it. Blood was rushing south at an alarming rate, but the organ providing it was experiencing a most unusual squeeze as well. He was touched by the regard, the concern being shown him in a vulnerable moment. He was already responding to it, and to his great surprise, Hannibal cared. He *ached* for this little Omega, whose name had somehow become branded across the fabric of cardiac muscle vaulted within his chest. Whose touch burned like a holy seal where it landed over the self-same region in a gesture of sympathetic commiseration. By all account, he should hate it. He should run. But he could not. And so he did not.

Instead, his arms almost of their own volition reached out and gently grasped the smaller man. Large palms cupped Shannon's clavicles, thumbs absently mapping the fabric covering the join of neck to shoulder before his hands slid down to grip at the omega's biceps. It took surprisingly little pressure exerted to pull him close to rest against Hannibal's powerful chest, trapping his hands between them and wrapping him up in strong arms and unspoken promises of protection. That enticing scent hit Hannibal's olfactory as he drew in a deep breath of contentment when the omega wriggled and tentatively returned the embrace, somehow making Hannibal feel enfolded despite his much larger size.

They stood like that for seconds that bled into millenia before Maddie's fussing became tinny wails that echoed through the baby monitor.

Will tensed but did not immediately disengage, letting himself slowly ease out of Hannibal's hold instead. Their fingertips were the last points of contact and they hovered suspended toward one another even after the touch had been broken, the spell only fully lifted once the omega turned and sprinted for the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

The photo between them is based on this shot of the Brothers Mikkelsen at a party; Mads is wearing a leather jacket, Lars is in a velvet suit. Poses and expressions borrowed from that. (<https://ekstrabladet.dk/flash/dkkendte/article4263320.ece>)

Heightened Awareness

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Notes

Here's where we earn that M rating, kids!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dinner had been an unexpected ordeal, spent hyper-aware of every tiny motion and sound the omega made, including several shy smiles sent in his direction and attempts at conversation that Hannibal could not have recalled a word of if he had a gun to his head. A sudden crash of thunder and explosion of lightning behind the windows startled everyone at the table, and his mother had seized on the natural phenomenon like a devious deity to insist he stay the night in his old room. The look on her face - pure implacable geniality - left no room for argument and Hannibal grudgingly agreed to wait out the storm.

The room was the same as it ever was, as it had been since he and Mads had moved out of the shared nursery at 10: framed sketches on the wall, a drafting desk, bookshelves crammed with medical texts, journals, well-loved classics and bric-a-brac he collected and selected throughout his life. Though there were 2 drawers full of pajamas for him and a collection of dressing gowns in the closet, Hannibal felt too on edge for layers. Stripped down to boxers so he didn't have to sleep in his suit, he prepared for bed and huffed his annoyance. Following an unproductive hour spent reading without comprehending a single word on the page, then pacing until he threatened the integrity of the carpet fibers, Hannibal finally drifted off after what felt like hours of tossing and turning.

He was wading into a stream, pale petals and ruby ribbons curling and flowing in the tide. He was swept off his feet and carried along with them, thrashing violently to reach a side, any side - the far bank that held his brother, smiling with half a paper face as he stood beside a shadow, or the near that held Shannon and his daughter, the pair of them wreathed in ropes and crowns of downy white flowers. The colors of everything seemed out of proportion, over-saturated yet strangely muted. It seemed the water should have been cool, too cold for comfort, but it felt as if tongues of fire were licking his flesh.

A soft cool touch to his burning skin seemed almost unreal, and jolted Hannibal bolt upright into a semi-conscious state. Blinking the residue of dreams from his eyes, he eventually focused on Shannon, half-kneeling on the bedside, small hand caught in mid-air and mid-action. He grabbed it in his own and tugged Shannon closer, the tantalizing scent of him wrapping around like wisps of gauzy chiffon.

"What are you doing?" His voice was a low growl, and he barely noticed the omega's widening eyes as his own nostrils flared and caught... no. *It couldn't be.* He inhaled again,

uncaring that he was none too subtly scenting the sudden arousal in the air, or that it was emanating from his dear brother's widow.

The omega's throat flexed and shivered against a hard swallow that made the Alpha's mouth water and his teeth ache.

"I... I heard... you were making noise. It sounded like you might be... in distress or something. I w-wanted... to make s-sure you... were alright." The implausible statement was broken up by ragged inhalations and soft hitches of breath and all Hannibal could see were the shapes his damned lips were making.

"And why would you care?" Hannibal demanded softly, exerting just enough pressure on the hand he still retained to direct the omega yet closer, feeling that small extremity tremble and twitch as it landed against the sweat-slick skin that shielded his pounding heart.

"Because, I c- ... Isn't that... what family does? Look out for one another?" Shannon's pronouncement tilted with unfocused doubt and something indefinable that lay beneath, his fingertips tangling in the glistening hair that furred Hannibal's chest.

"Is it? I would hardly know," Hannibal whispered as his free hand slid to wrap around the Omega's bared neck, thumbing the pulse point that skipped and sped at the touch, over the scent gland filling the air with his delicate perfume like a diffuser. *And we are not family.* He placed a knuckle beneath the soft roundness of his chin and directed the omega's face up to look into his eyes, and was shocked to see the luminous blue nearly swallowed by pupils blown too large to attribute solely to the darkness of the room. "But that is not the only reason for your being here, is it?"

"N... no." The omega's lids lowered like a curtain, those impossibly long lashes becoming sooty smudges on the ripe apples of his cheeks. Then they snapped up, hitting Hannibal full-force like a klieg light. "I think I... might be starting to find you interesting... Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal's hand shifted to the front of the delicate neck of the omega before him, a wild thought flashing through his mind that it would be so easy to break. A mere reed in his fingers, a teacup easily shattered. He banished it and all other cogitation as he hauled Shannon closer and claimed his mouth. His taste... by the *gods*, so sweet. Ambrosial nectar, to be sipped another day, now only to be devoured and shared. Shannon's small fangs nipped at the full curve of Hannibal's lower lip and the Alpha let out a muted groan. Fingers plowed into those teasing curls, forcing his head back as Hannibal mouthed the edge of his jaw, the satin skin of his throat, tasting his pulse and getting drunk on the heady, ever-growing scent of warm fertile omega. His fangs were sliding, the points dragging over delicate skin with the fine pressure of a knife tip, controlled danger, yearning to pierce and mark.

His arms wound round the omega, urging him closer, pressing together every point he could reach. His hands roamed, palming and cupping, testing and teasing. The roundness of a shoulder, the hollow under a scapula, the firmness of a pectoral, the tapering line of a lean waist, the quivering muscle of belly and thigh, the almost lewd prominence of a hipbone, the taut globe of a gluteal.

And then there was the *scent*. Hannibal cursed in several languages in his mind as the intoxicating aroma, signature of the rarest of delicacies, invaded his senses and overrode his sense. His already heightened olfactory gland (adept by now at finding the threads of the omega's efflux in any room) dove deep into the stream of natural perfume, seeking out every subtle note and element like a chef laying bare the secret ingredients in a recipe. Vanilla, hot spice, cinnamon, a hit of something dark - espresso, brandy, bitter chocolate. And the sinful cream on top was the luscious musk of arousal as the omega's slick began to flow.

He was achingly erect, pheromones singing in his blood, instincts starting to bay and scratch at the firmly locked door of his composure and civility. And somehow the omega *knew*, just as he seemed to know everything else Hannibal wished to hide.

In a flash air was kissing the heated skin of his cock, instantly taken over by a small powerful fist working him gently but securely, a thumb trailing over the head to spread the potent pre-cum oozing from the tip before the hand dragged silken trails down the formidable length and back again. He shuddered as waves of sensation began building, lapping at the edges of his nerves like ripples in a pond kissing the shore. His body was on fire, his brain threatening to go up in flames at the sinfully skilled touch. Of course the omega would know how just to touch him, learning his body as he had likely learned his- The thought was brutally cut off by a slight twist at the conclusion of the last upstroke.

Nightshirt hanging off one smooth shoulder, Shannon quickly straddled the Alpha and hovered a moment before letting the head of Hannibal's swelling cock breach his weeping entrance. His fingers dug sharply into Hannibal's trapezius and splenius cervicis muscles, just as Hannibal's fingers gripped the omega's narrow hips and felt the adductors in his thighs tighten. By the gods but he was *tight*, hotter than the sun, slicker than a field of morning daisies. The Alpha willed himself to stay still as the omega moved down, sinking inch by torturous inch until he finally bottomed out, gently seated in Hannibal's lap.

His forehead tipped forward to rest on the smaller man's shoulder, marveling at the coolness of the skin against his own feverish flesh. One arm banded tight as steel around the omega's back, pulling him impossibly closer, as though they could merge into one entity if only he could will it to be so.

He had just enough presence of mind to capture Shannon's mouth in a searing kiss and swallow down his moan of surprise before he bodily lifted the omega and brought him back down, rolling his hips in a fluid elliptical pattern, the perpetual repetition driving them both out of their minds with need.

The omega threw his head back with a gasp, breaking the kiss and arching into Hannibal's thrusts with abandon. Shannon's small teeth nipped at his earlobe and along his jaw before those perfect pink lips that drove him to distraction proceeded to pepper every available inch of his face with tiny kisses, their delivery interspersed with tiny whispers and bit-back moans that slid down his ear like warm honey.

The pace grew frantic and less measured as Hannibal's instinct howled for satisfaction, demanding release, screaming *mate, breed, bite, fill*. The blood roared in his ears like a living thing as Shannon bore down on him, hips crashing to meet his with erotic fury. Thoughts battered his flagging consciousness like breaking waves.

This was incredible.

This was wrong.

It was so *frighteningly* right.

It couldn't happen again.

He was already imagining the next time, the omega in the center of his large bed at home, presenting for him on all fours, spine a textbook lordosis curve, hips perfectly fitted to his hands. Hearing him scream out his pleasure instead of biting it back behind those pearly whites, fingers running through that mop of sable curls and pulling just enough to draw him up into Hannibal's embrace as the Alpha drove into him. Hannibal's knot swelling, filling him, locking them together for hours, days, years. Drawing one orgasm after another out of each other, Shannon's hot clenching muscles triggering his body to spend itself within, which would send the omega over the edge, which would then drag Hannibal over again, a feedback loop, an ouroboros of sexual sensation.

Oh gods Shannon was whimpering, tightening around him like a vise. He was - yes, *Yes*, **YES!** - he was going to-

Hannibal slammed into wakefulness with a gasp like a drowning man breaking the water's surface. His mind, unable to stop itself, quickly catalogued the situation. Sweat coated him like a diamond wrap. He was breathing as though he'd just run down prey through miles of forest, and *painfully* aroused despite the ropes of spend splashed over his heaving abdominals. Shannon was nowhere to be seen... although the lingering effects of the dream made him swear the omega's arousal still hovered in the atmosphere charged with electricity and redolent with the stench of Alpha pheromones coming off him like particle waves. Every muscle in his body was tensed to leap out of bed and pursue, hunt, battle, go seek his mate and claim them before God and the universe. He had popped a knot in his sleep like some damned teenager in their first rut.

*It was a dream. You are alone. That omega is not and never will be your mate. You cannot have him. You cannot go to him. **He. Is. Not. Yours.***

Every curse in every language he knew flew through his head to silently vent his sudden and unholy disappointment. He wanted to throw something, break bones, set his teeth to the throat of a rival and bathe in the spurt of arterial spray. He wanted... he wanted. *Gods damnation*. Plowing his fingers through the soaked strands of his hair, he gripped tight in frustration, threw back his head and let out a howl that seemed to vibrate the walls themselves.

Chapter End Notes

runs and hides

Heightened Awareness pt 2

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After a day so unexpectedly... nice, the night was oddly subdued. While Will and Grace chatted calmly, Hannibal seemed closed off, almost walled away from the world like a princess encased in ice. By dessert, the strange tension around the table was so high everyone in the room jumped when lightning flashed and thunder clapped so loud the windows rattled in their casings. As Will cradled his screaming daughter, Grace directed a genial grin towards her son and insisted (in a sweet tone that left no room for argument) that he stay instead of driving back to Baltimore. He'd agreed with the reluctant acceptance of a man facing a firing squad, and Grace had taken Maddie with her for the night. Hannibal had murmured something in his direction before heading upstairs as well, leaving Will alone at the table with melting ice cream and a sympathetic Beta.

At something of a loose end without his daughter to fuss over and with no one to talk to, Will climbed under the covers with a vintage copy of Hans Christian Andersen. Sometime later, he was shocked out of a restless sleep by some internal ping that something wasn't right, that someone he loved was in danger or distress. Barefoot and frazzled, he went to check on Maddie. But she was fine, sound asleep in a bassinet in Grace's suite, the elder omega's finger trapped in her baby fist.

As he walked back, still trying to shake the sensation creeping up his spine like an icy finger, he passed Hannibal's room and heard an odd noise - almost a whimper. It so unsettled Will, his brain trying and utterly failing to associate a sound like that with a capital A *Alpha* like Hannibal Lecter, that he reached for the door handle without thinking, only wishing to reach him and make certain he was alright.

And then the wave hit. Soft at first but growing more intense by the moment, the pheromones leaking under the door like smoke had a profound and *immediate* effect. Will was helpless to do anything but stand there, rooted to the spot, breathing and absorbing while his instincts woke up and demanded to be released from the cage Will kept them in, buried in the dark recesses of his mind.

Alpha! they breathed excitedly. *Mate! Seed! Knot! Bite! SUBMIT!* The chorus of demand grew as the noises from within took on a far more animalistic timbre, grunts and groans that Will desperately wished to feel against his skin. A sudden rush of slick surprised him, startling him to consciousness just as his fingers were starting to turn the knob. He huddled there in the hall, door handle in a white-knuckled grip, slick trickling down his thighs from the sheer intoxicating influx of **ALPHA** that permeated the air and penetrated every pore. He felt drunk with it, and petrified by the threat of losing control.

The last vestige of self-preserving coherence fought its way to the fore, and when Hannibal's howl deafened the universe, Will's danger alarm blared to life. He bit back a terrified

whimper and fled to his room like the hounds of Satan were hunting him down.

Turning the lock and stuffing towels under the door to block the maddening scent he could almost visualize coming down the hall like beckoning fingers of steam in an old cartoon, Will grabbed another armful and laid them in bed like an absorbent nest. Quickly shedding his soiled nightshirt and soaked underwear, he laid down and bundled himself in blankets, praying to gods he wasn't sure he believed in that the night's unexpected episode hadn't triggered a heat, false or otherwise. He buried his face in his hands and forced himself to breathe and try to calm down, staring up at the painted ceiling when his fingers threaded themselves despairingly into his shortened curls. He couldn't bear the thought of another overbearing prick trying to control him, using his biology as a shackle to keep him down. And Matthew had only been a demi-alpha. A capital A thoroughbred like *Hannibal*? Had to be twice as bad or worse. Right?

What with his alpha arrogance, and his frou-frou tailored suits, and his stupid fangs hidden in those too-rare smiles. That hair with the metallic gleam that made Will's fingers itch to run through it. And those strange golden eyes, all lit up like amber that threatened to seal Will inside and hold him forever. The sadness within him that spoke to Will's soul and made him yearn to soothe. The laugh that sounded like music to his ears. And the obvious muscle that came with the breed, flexing and bunching and... tightening. Glistening under a sheen of perspiration because people this rich didn't *sweat*. The refined salt taste on Will's tongue if he licked the defined column of Hannibal's throat or nibbled the pulse point inside his elegant wrist. The way those pillowy lips would feel against his, on his body, whispering soft endearments into his hair as he held Will close. The sensation of those fangs piercing his skin in a claiming bite, forging a bond of the biochemical and emotional, locking their souls together the way knotting locked their bodies. The rock hard thickness of his cock sliding home inside of Will, fingers tangling as his body blanketed Will's own in the traditional position, or watching his pupils dilate as Will rode him.

By the gods...

Not consciously noting his hands roaming over his dampening body or the way his legs spread as his mind wandered, Will was in the middle before he realized anything had begun. He bit down on his knuckle to hold back an obscene moan as his other hand worked rapidly against his sex, teasing through the still gushing slick to substitute fingers for what his body so desperately craved. *This was wrong*. But it felt too right to stop. His mind screamed Hannibal's name as his orgasm hit like a freight train, and his body tried hard to clench around a non-existent knot while Will slowly drifted back to earth.

He spared a moment's relief that Maddie was elsewhere for the night before the enormity of what he'd just done slammed home.

"Oh, shit," he breathed, running to the bathroom to clean up and wash his hands with scalding water and way too much soap before he collected his locket on its beautiful new chain to beseech his mother's portrait. "Mom," he pleaded, "What am I gonna do?" As before she was silent but for the first time in a very long time, Will felt hopelessly alone. He was mired, adrift in a stream of emotional reactivity, tangling himself in a web of deceit that might choke

him any day. He might hurt people who cared about him, whom he cared about more with each day that passed. He hated this.

Unable to look at his wrecked reflection in the mirror, his eyes dropped back to the locket, landing this time on not his mother but its other occupant. The half face, still so beautiful, undiminished by the fact he no longer existed in this plane - a sun sealed in frozen amber. As he stared, his eyes flooded with tears, blurring the half into a whole, merging with his twin's in a recombinant dance - fluids melding in a solution to create some new substance. The face stared back, swallowing the shadows as a watery shaft of moonlight illuminated the eye that pierced Will to the soul. He crumbled, exhausted by the burden of his unexpected double life, of trying to shore up his defenses to protect this acquired family from everything that could hurt them - including himself. He wanted nothing more in the world than to be held, cradled and told that everything would be alright - including himself. A mother's embrace, the arms of his bonded beloved. He didn't have those things. He couldn't have those now.

"I'm sorry," he sobbed, feeling like his heart was splintering. "I'm so so sorry."

The morning light found him still curled on the tile, locket clutched tight in his fist, shining tracks of salt stiff on his sleeping face.

Chapter End Notes

So now that we've gotten Will's POV out of the way, we're back to our regularly scheduled Wednesday updates.

Up next: Hannibal deals with the morning after...

Modern Detective

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Hannibal reflects on the last 24 hours... and goes in search of answers he may not want to find.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The following morning, Hannibal fled the house before sunup. He told himself it was common sense that urged him away so early and not sexually frustrated instinctual panic. He had to get home, shower, attire himself in fresh clothing, get to his office, finish up patient notes before his first appointments, and check where Bedelia had rearranged his neglected schedule from the previous day. Certain of his rotating neurotics did not deal well with change; he was thinking of them. Of course. This and nothing else was the cause.

Arriving home, he took a moment to breathe in the tranquility only money could buy. He really did like this house, this street, this neighborhood. What he decidedly did *not* like was the feeling currently embedded in his skin and every fiber of his clothes like urticating hairs. He felt uncomfortable and... grimy, for lack of a better word, and the fact that he typically commanded a vocabulary possessed of several appropriate alternatives only served to stoke the banked embers of his chagrin. Toeing out of his shoes, he silently stalked up the stairs to his bedroom, ripping off his rumpled clothing and setting it aside to be cleaned. Grateful for the muted light filtering through the frosted skylights, he stepped into the monsoon shower and prepared to scrub away the unpleasant feeling... and the residue of tangled memories from the day - and night - before.

Shannon smiling, Shannon laughing. Shannon with his attractive new hair and imminently suitable new clothes. Shannon's fingers brushing his mouth. Shannon signing the wrong name. Shannon holding his daughter. Shannon holding Hannibal. Hannibal holding him. Arms tightening and pulling close. Nuzzling his curls to breathe in his scent. That scent overwhelming him, intoxicating him, leaving him drunk on adoration, entirely at the omega's mercy. The delicate perfume taking on a sharper edge as it blended with arousal and need and slick, coating Hannibal's skin pure and smooth as water and drowning his sensibilities. The taste of his mouth, his skin, the shivering resistance of flesh beneath teeth, fangs piercing. A claiming bite. Shannon gasping, Shannon moaning. Shannon laid out beneath Hannibal like a jewel in a case, clinging to him. Shannon keening for him as Hannibal drove into him from behind. Opening for him, taking his knot. *The way he had for-*

Hannibal's eyes went wide as his balls tightened and a thick stream of ejaculate painted the steamed glass, running into the swirling water to be washed down the drain like lost evidence. What the hell was he *doing*?! The urge to punch one of the imported tiles until it shattered into a spiderweb of cracks was almost overwhelming. He felt his fist flexing, knuckles so tightly compressed they were threatening to pop.

Devil take it, he was **not** some horny teenager who thought with his knot. He was Hannibal Lecter, thoroughbred Alpha. Educated, well-spoken, handsome, cultured. A skilled and much sought medical professional in rigid control of himself and his cryptid emotions.

And the undeniable truth in the moment was that he was pathetically (and rather messily) lusting after his brother's widow.

He spun the dial until the water rained down on him in frigid spikes, purging the amatory remains from him and forcing him to focus. Emerging 10 minutes later, he toweled off with a vicious vigor and went to his walk-in, the lavender and eucalyptus mister he had installed in the doorway enhancing his calm. Sartorial selections were made with surgical caution, each piece of tailored armor applied with military ruthlessness. A few final touches - tastefully understated designer watch, bronze cufflinks inlaid with opaque horn, mirror-finish shoes, hair impeccably smooth, a last straightening of his already perfect double Windsor - and he gathered his attache, secured his home, bundled into his Bentley and plotted a smooth course to the office.

All signs pointed to a wholly unremarkable day, save the note he penned when he arrived. As he stepped out for lunch, he left it on Bedelia's desk and walked out before he could change his mind and reclaim it. That evening, as he sat doing the last updates of his patient files, his eyes strayed to the slim red folder at the edge of his desk. He knew what it contained. The answer - for better or worse - to his question. *Well... one of them, at least.*

Eventually, all work completed and put away, Hannibal had nothing left to do but deal with it.

Opening his top left desk drawer, he extracted a silver case and lighter, withdrew and lit a single cheroot, and had everything cleared and stored before the first clouded exhalation. Such base indulgence was uncharacteristic of him, as was the fact he had shed his suit jacket and loosened the pristine knot of his tie, even allowing the top button to be undone as he sat perched sideways on the edge of his desk.

An outside observer (not that Hannibal would have permitted *anyone* to see him in such a state of imperfection) might remark on the resemblance to a scene in a 1940s detective movie, or perhaps even a film noir. Tendrils of smoke framing a hard-edged expression, the classic twist to his clothing, the potentially explosive revelation that lay innocent on his desk, held harmless in ink and paper. All that was missing was a measure of Scotch and plaintive blues playing in the background. The idea of alcohol held some appeal; the musical suggestion and its maudlin chaotic overtones held none.

Cheroot held expertly in his lips, Hannibal pushed off the desk and gathered his things in a rush, pausing at the door to flick the switch and plunge the room (and any secrets it held) into

the comfort of obscuring darkness. The clock on the mantel tick-tock-ticked the space of a minute.

Then the lights came back on, Hannibal's things were summarily dumped in a tidy heap on his reclining couch, and he grabbed up the folder, snapping it open with a fatal noise.

Hannibal

Per your inquiry:

Willia Graham and her unborn child were listed among the victims of the train wreck.

- Bedelia

It might be enough. Then again, it might not. It would certainly require explanations, why Shannon was signing a dead woman's name. But the omega had proven much smarter than anticipated, more insightful, more... everything. His beauty was only part of his charm, though not a negligible one by any means.

Everything about the omega was breathtaking, from the distracting curls and the fascinating mind they covered to the adorable toes in those gods-awful hi-tops. The eyes that saw too much and changed too often, the mouth that quirked and frowned and teased and spouted undiluted truth. The body which had carried and born life, still held that potential, a slighter shorter frame that could seemingly support the weight of the world.

He rolled off his desk edge to the waiting chair, tilting back and setting his heels to the corner in an uncharacteristically casual display. Allowing the omega such quarter in his thoughts was dangerous territory, but Hannibal found himself unwilling to close the door on the topic just yet. Finishing his cheroot made him consider a second, but his mind elected a different brand of indulgence by replaying his intense dream from the wee hours. And intense it had been, the effects still lingering like the aftermath of psychotropics in the bloodstream. Only one instance prior had left him feeling so wholly out of control - an experiment as an undergrad where he'd ingested psilocybin from a brewed mushroom tea on camera and written a paper on the experience. It had been... a profound thing. He'd naturally received an A and a subtle warning to not attempt such a risky thing again, even in the name of research.

This new experience was similarly affecting, though far harder to quantify and understand. He appreciated beauty and even the odd satiation of his more carnal appetites, though he'd never been one for masturbatory aids and demanded obedience from his body even in the rare grip of rut. So what was this hold Shannon held on him? The younger man had slipped

beneath his skin like a rabbit under a garden fence and was proving incapable of being routed or ignored with any degree of success.

Whatever the source of the unnatural attraction, it was proving a wound so deep it would undoubtedly scar.

He pinched the bridge of his nose and breathed with rhythmic focus until the migraine that was threatening to erupt in his occipital basin resolved itself.

His plan had always been to focus on his practice until such time as he desired an heir, whereupon he would select a beta or omega to mate from among the elite who matched him and suited him and complemented his life and lifestyle, using similar criteria as he would regarding any accoutrement or *objet d'art* he considered acquiring. They would be a source of envy, content if not precisely happy as he'd been raised to expect. He did not expect to be challenged, and he did not expect to fall in love as one fell off a cliff. As in most things, his brother had gotten that, well-matched and so glowingly happy it was obvious even over a phoneline from 3000 miles away. And the more he'd gotten to know Shannon, the more he understood. So unlike his brother's typical sort, yet so unique, so captivating that attraction made sense. *Here* was an omega to debate with and delight in, who could challenge and then calm their Alpha, who could thoroughly please their mate while driving them to blissful madness with their entirety.

He wanted - gods help him but he *wanted* the omega. For solace and companionship and those devastating smiles directed his way, for nights spent wrapped around one another in peace as well as passion. And oh but such passion as lay beneath that surface. His hands wished to map every curve and edge and angle, his ears wanted to hear every utterance, thought, gasp or invective. He could fill journals with naught but the study of his subject, committing all to paper and an entire newly constructed wing of his memory palace. Even now, the vision of the omega was so vibrantly clear it felt he could easily reach out and touch the man.

His cock swelled as the innocuous merged with the erotic. His tongue swept over his lower lip before he captured the flesh between his teeth. Hannibal's fangs itched to sink into the yielding flesh of the omega's neck and claim - and that was when his fantastic recollections halted. It was true Shannon had tended to wear Beta-tailored clothing, largely designed to hide the neck and join at the shoulders, and too big on him to reveal the details of his extremities. There was even an old joke about a Beta in a halter top.

But the person with whom he'd shared the day previous had been absolutely clad in Omegan clothing. And Hannibal realized as his dream replayed that Shannon did in fact sleep in nightshirts, oversized things designed to be comfy and loose as anything tolerable could be during a heat. They were soft cottons and knits for baby's skin, and had a tendency to slip over one shoulder or another, the neckline extra-wide by design, as usually the only ones seeing an Omega in such a state of undress would be their bonded mates.

And for all Hannibal's not inconsiderable mental ability, as he flashed through image after image on the walls of his memory, he noticed something. Or rather the **absence** of something. Any glimpse of the omega's neck he'd ever caught showed nothing but tantalizingly smooth skin. Unmarked skin.

Unbitten skin.

Even the most private of couples displayed claiming bites *somewhere*, making it unmistakable that they were taken even if it was unclear by whom. He'd seen ankle bites, shoulder bites, bites in the pectoral over the heart, even wrists bitten instead of the cake at weddings... but always something findable if one were looking. Hannibal had spent considerable time doing precisely that. And though Mads' remains had been considered unsuitable for viewing, Hannibal had viewed them. Partly to see his brother one last time, partly to spare his mother the unnecessary shock of identification, partly to say a final goodbye where the only witness to his tears was the only one who should see them yet would never speak of the incident. And even through the hazy filter of raw emotion, Hannibal recalled quite clearly that his brother had had a claiming bite - small and an inch or so past the join of neck and shoulder but unmistakable in its presence.

Shannon's neck... was the neck of an unbonded Omega. Shannon's shoulder where a corresponding bite *could* be hiding held taut muscle over delicate bone... but no scar tissue that Hannibal's too-sensitive digits would have felt even through fabric.

Whoever the omega currently in residence at his family home and in the deep seat of his mind was... was **not** his brother's mate.

Chapter End Notes

dramatic musical sting Bum-bum-BUM!!

Up next: will our Alpha have the guts (or heart) to break the news to his mother?

The Gods Might Be Crazy....

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Hannibal intends to deal with the potential fallout of sharing his revelation.... and ends up with potential of a wholly different sort.

Chapter Notes

Guess who's back? Back again? *kills the music* No I didn't die. We'll call it 'Real Life Infringement Syndrome' and leave it at that.

I should be back to regular updates until the end of the line.

This one is for Maddie, who sweetly kicked my butt until I got back to work.

Also also, it's been a minute so a reminder: Will is Will when it's his POV, and Shannon or the Omega when it's someone else's.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He gave it 48 hours.

Call it a stay of execution, call it consideration for the enormity of the repercussions but Hannibal had needed the time - if only to know how best to handle the lit stick of dynamite he suddenly found in his possession.

His Bentley nearly steered itself to the family seat twice the night of the revelation, but he'd firmly forced the wheel in the direction of home and made himself take a night or two to sleep on the best course of action. A hearty breakfast, every dish washed, suit selected with extreme care, day endured with the barest minimum of fuss. Wash, rinse, repeat and the answer presented itself. (Admittedly, it wasn't much but a plan that minimized the bloodshed was better than one that soaked the hardwood.)

He finished his patient notes, secured his office as he walked Bedelia out, verified the desk sergeant on duty that night, and made sure to have his mother's lawyer on speed dial. Only then did he point the wheels towards Guilford and step on the accelerator.

As he pulled in and killed the engine Hannibal allowed himself a single steadying breath, a suppressing blanket of fire extinguisher spray over the taunting coals in his stomach that

hissed with every touch of the ice water with which he was attempting to flood his veins. *Cool, calm, collected. Identify the malignancy of the foreign body, then determine the safest way to excise it with the least amount of trauma to the host.*

(Or hostess, in this case.)

As he let himself in in lieu of knocking, Hannibal only vaguely registered the absence of Jimmy, too fixated on his destination and the duty to be performed there.

"Mother, I have something to discuss with you," he launched without preamble as he entered the salon. But his mother was not alone. Perched like a Weeble on the edge of the Louis XIV sofa sat Franklyn Froideveaux, the junior partner of the man whom Hannibal had ensured was in his lightning contacts prior to coming. "Franklyn? What are you doing here?" The chubby beta always smelled vaguely of a week-old grilled cheese sandwich, and there were crumbs in his dark wiry beard as he struggled to regain his feet, damp hand offered to the Alpha when finally he managed.

"Uh, y-your mother wished to draw up a new will to include her daughter-in-law and, um... grandchild."

"Oh." Hannibal felt every muscle within his physiognomy tighten into something approaching a rictus grin. "Has she." Spinning smoothly on his heel, he crossed to where his mother sat at her escritoire, swathed in layers of hand-painted chiffon and ironclad authority. His expression grew lax and his voice grew soft, eyes widening to convey the most refined version of *you cannot be serious*. "Mother, you cannot do this."

"Darling... do not start."

Oh, gods. It was going to be one of *those* interactions. Hannibal drew another deep inhalation through his nose, fighting the sudden urge to pinch the bridge of it to dispel the knot of tension forming under his left eye. The scent of his mother had a remarkable analgesic efficacy. "I have.... uncovered something of great import concerning Shannon."

One flawlessly penciled brow formed a perfect arc at the pronouncement. "You mean to tell me you have been investigating that poor child? Rootling around in his history like a pig hunting truffles?" Hannibal manfully kept his wincing reaction at his mother's tone internalized, even as his Alpha nature fought with the role of dutiful son at the sudden flash of gold in her gaze. "I had thought we were past this."

"Mother, if it were not important - one might even use the term 'vital' -" Grace's eyes flicked to a point past his shoulder and Hannibal instantly swallowed the remainder of his words just as... the Omega entered the room, clad in black slacks and a matching tailored waistcoat with a subtle charcoal pinstripe over a decidedly appealing lavender buttondown, top button undone, sleeves rolled to the elbows. The mere sight of his forearms was enough to make Hannibal's fangs itch.

"I heard you wanted to see - oh. H-hello." Shannon's voice skipped as he noticed the unexpected company.

Grace handled introductions with typical aplomb. "Shannon, this is Franklyn Froideveaux, one of my attorneys. Pray do not hold that against him." As Shannon turned to greet the rotund beta, Hannibal noticed the grey satin backing of the waistcoat, warmly reflecting the ambient light in a manner quite intriguing for such a cool shade.

"So... what can I do for you?"

With the decisive calm of a monarch issuing a royal decree, Grace explained her plan of inclusion. Hannibal watched intently, arms crossed, with breath that was bated and a traitorous olfactory system that happily drew in the scent of warm raw sugar. Then the younger Omega's forehead pinched in a furrow despite eyebrows clearly desperate to escape into his curls.

"What? You can't do that!"

The elder Omega inclined her head slightly to one side, regarding him with the faintest of perceptible wrinkles forming between her own brows. "I assure you I can," she countered gently.

"But... I don't want you to!" *Wait. What?* "Hannibal, please." The Omega turned to him, blue eyes pleading. "Tell her how crazy this is. She *can't*-" His voice broke like a china cup against the harsh emotion struggling to break free. The wide eyes he had turned imploringly on the Alpha were luminous with something that looked suspiciously like tears and Hannibal felt his lateral pterygoid suddenly loosen in surprise that bordered on mild shock.

Either the man was a consummate actor.... *or*...

"Shannon, darling. Why not? Whatever is the matter?" The elder Omega rose and sought to lay a hand on the younger's arm to soothe his rising distress. A hint of scorching caramel already permeated the air and even Franklyn was growing uncomfortable. "Consider your child. Do you not want what is best for her, to provide her with the best?"

"But that's why I'm here! I mean... I'm here because of you." He turned once more to regard Hannibal. "And you." He resumed facing the elder Omega, expression tragically tender. "Because you took us in, you looked after us and gave us a home." One hand had found a beseeching grip on Grace's, calm a moment before its mate drove into his curls at speed. "Not for the money. I don't care about that. I'm not here for the money!"

"Well of course not," Grace soothed, simultaneously easing whitened knuckles out of his hair. "No one thinks that. Does anyone here actually think that?" Hannibal and Franklyn wisely remained silent and developed a mutual interest in the crown molding, though neither missed the Looks being directed at them from the Omegas less than 10 feet away. Shannon's attention eventually returned to the Lecter matriarch, voice soft yet with an edge like a glass splinter to Hannibal's ear.

"Grace. Please. Maybe it sounds crazy but I just... don't want you to sign that."

Moving to stand directly before Shannon, face curiously unreadable, Grace reached a small hand forward to cup his cheek. He instantly curled, leaning pathetically into the touch, eyes

limpid around blown pupils. The simple action/reaction pairing caused a strange tremble in Hannibal's cardiac region. "Well, my dear. It is my money and I want to sign it." Holding the young man's face in both hands fondly a moment, she ruffled his hair affectionately before releasing him to go sit once more at the desk. "In point of fact, I now wish to sign it more than I did before." The pen moved across the page with a *scritch* of finality and she shot a regally triumphant look past Shannon to the two men still standing silently behind him. "Now then, Hannibal. You had something you wanted to tell me?"

The Alpha and other Omega locked eyes across the imported tile, and in that instant Hannibal came away scratched. Claws sheathed, fangs retracted, "No," he managed with a quiet finality.

All of a sudden Beverly rushed in, a monochromatic blur. "Mrs. Lecter?" Grace and Will both replied with a 'yes' that made Beverly startle, then smile briefly before her expression fell. "We have a situation. It's Jimmy."

Five pairs of eyes swung like searchlights around the room until the majority landed on Mrs. Lecter, who hardly had time to say 'go' with a dismissive wave before Beverly took off, followed by Will, Hannibal hot on his heels.

They found him in the pool, two doors past the kitchen. Hannibal recalled it had been drained a few weeks prior, the sheer tonnage of all that had transpired in that time keeping him from marking the unseasonable delay in the completion of the decennial re-tiling. Jimmy was in his pajamas and a silk robe Hannibal had gifted him for Christmas 5 years ago, dancing drunkenly back and forth across the shallow end as he hummed a tuneless melody. A bottle of Johnny Walker black sat by the steps, kept company in its half empty state by a Baccarat old-fashioned glass that found its way to Jimmy's lips between unsynchronized laps. Beverly kept her voice low as the three of them went unnoticed for a worryingly large handful of minutes.

"It was the repairman. Had the nerve to call himself a 'tile artisan.' Jimmy thought it might be love, but I could tell that bastard was just out for a good time." *And perhaps a crack at the trappings of wealth which surrounded him*, Hannibal pondered, unaware that the Omega at his side was echoing the unspoken diagnosis. After another sweep of the clock hand, Hannibal permitted a sigh as he edged along the perimeter, handing his shed suit jacket to a perplexed Shannon.

"Wait," Will asked as he padded after. "What are you going to do?"

"I am going to fish him out." In a fluid motion that would have done his twin proud, Hannibal stepped down into the cavern with a muted thud, surprisingly light on soles of hand-crafted Italian leather. Carefully corralling the brokenhearted Beta while Shannon hovered by the steps and Beverly watched fondly from the deep end, Hannibal allowed himself to be bypassed as Jimmy spun to a stop over the drain.

"And y'know what else?" Jimmy slurred, flinging an accusatory hand at the wall. "He... was a *lousy* tile man too." The humming returned as he swept in a little chaine, ending with a flourishing stomp of his heel against the tiles - which did indeed cause a few unevenly set ones to rattle loose and fall like gunshot victims. "See? Comes right off."

Between the three of them, they saw him safely if unsteadily back on dry land, and Beverly took her leave at Hannibal's insistence they had the situation under control. The pair managed to navigate around any obstacles as they supported the off-kilter butler currently slung between them like a sentient sack of potatoes, eventually steering him through the kitchen towards his quarters - a full 3 smaller rooms Mother had had converted into a suite for him when the twins were just out of the nursery. It was usually his sanctuary, and Hannibal's cautious sniff at the air had him thanking Beverly's foresight to have the linens changed and the space freshened.

Jimmy was still humming, having finally acquired a rhythm Will could identify as a waltz just as they poured him carefully into bed. Hannibal took care of his slippers while Will grasped the edge of the comforter and began tucking it around the butler like he was the filling in an oversized burrito.

"Wha're you doong?" The query was delivered via an invisible cloud that made Will's eyes water, causing him to blink a few times before he could reply in a gentle tone.

"I'm making a Jimmy chimi." A moment's silence reigned before a bray of laughter erupted from the bundled figure in bed, followed by a suppressed noise that couldn't possibly have been a snort from the room's other occupant.

"You are such a nice 'mega." A liquid gaze managed to focus after a few passes in the direction of his now bared and wiggling toes. "Don' you think he's a nice 'mega, Hann'bal?"

"Certainly, Jimmy," came the reply, near enough to Will's elbow when he hadn't heard the Alpha move that he almost jumped.

"C'mere." Will moved away, and the Alpha's face was writ with fondness as he leaned in, one hand braced on the headboard. Once Hannibal was in range, Jimmy's hand grasped his tie and tugged his ear to within an inch of his mouth. "You should dance with him," he suggested in a stage whisper that was nearer a projection to the mezzanine.

"Whatever you say, old man." The promise was delivered with a kiss to the brow, and Hannibal turned to stalk to where the Omega was now hovering in the doorway. No sooner had Hannibal began a cultured parody of the twist than Jimmy let out a 'Hann'bal- no!' amid a mumbling stream Yosemite Sam would envy and flailed to loosen the covers until he could lie slantways and reach the hi-fi turntable on the low mahogany dresser by the bed. A fumble at the switches and music filled the room.

Ahh, Dvorak, Hannibal mused. Serenade for strings in E Major, tempo di valse.

"Now," Jimmy declared, arms flung wide as he flopped back into the pillows. "Dance!"

Hannibal spun Will smoothly through the doorway, letting the music carry them away. They danced a slightly faltering circuit around the kitchen island, Will's feet beginning to move right as half-remembered lessons from his childhood came back in a nostalgic wave. As they returned to the starting point, a rumbling snore emanated from Jimmy's quarters, and Will's left hand latched onto Hannibal's as he drew them on tiptoe towards the open door -

whereupon the unconscious Beta popped up, spotted them, and demanded at volume that they **dance!**

Clasped hands suddenly an arc over their heads, Hannibal settled his free hand against the small of the Omega's back and drew him closer, moving in rhythm back to the sanded tile floor in the kitchen. They fell into step with each other like lifelong partners, Hannibal throwing in a bit of tango footwork only to find the Omega following him with ease. The music entered a sweeping crescendo as he tipped the smaller man back into a deep dip, a long line of compression between their bodies while Shannon's leg lifted to shift into an unthinking counterbalance. They hung there suspended a moment, breath mingling, hearts seeming to reach for each other through their ribs. As he snapped them straight, Shannon looked up almost startled, and Hannibal found himself staring without hope into striking sea blue eyes. He felt as though he was drowning in their depths, as though only the man in his arms could help him breathe again.

They never knew who moved first (perhaps it was just the next perfectly matched step) but suddenly Will was awash in sensation, swaying on the balls of his feet to follow the mouth tenderly ravishing his own and its equally intoxicating owner. The faint scrape of stubble against his thumb coupled with the warm, wet slide of lips against his was making Will tremble like a leaf in an autumn breeze.

Hannibal steadied him with a hand splayed just above the swell of his backside, the other sliding to cup the Omega's jaw, tilting him up for more. He nosed along the line of Shannon's now bared collarbone, dipped his tongue into the brazen suprasternal notch, dotted a line of kisses up the column of his throat and to the hinge of his mandible like Morse Code. His ears were best left alone for now - they looked entirely too edible for Hannibal's peace of mind.

Will merely closed his eyes and leaned further, hardly caring if he went past the tipping point as it would only land him in Hannibal's embrace. His skin prickled with goosebumps, a freezing hot tingling shiver racing through his body.

He couldn't breathe. He didn't want to.

Long fingers threaded into his curls and tightened, sending a frisson of heat directly to his groin. He was suddenly standing on a shock tile, electricity entering through his heels, licking up his spine and shooting to the ends of his nerves. A splash in the stream of his consciousness convinced him Hannibal might be experiencing a similar reaction. Their lips met and met again, occasionally breaking apart for inconsequential things like oxygen. The pheromones bleeding into the air were growing thicker by the minute.

Finally, Hannibal broke away with a mumbled take leave, hair a beautiful wreck, collected his jacket from the countertop and started for a door just visible past the cedar cabinetry. Then a few seconds later he returned, having recalled he was **not** in fact spending the night here and had a home of his own to return to. A murmured 'good night' was punctuated with an accompanying press of his lips to Will's and he was gone again.

Less than 10 seconds brought him across Will's path once more, now remembering he had actually parked in front of the house instead of the rear garage - whereupon Will's fingers entirely of their own accord grasped the front of his midnight blue checked waistcoat and

hauled him in for another embrace. The brief twining of tongues, a shiver that seemed to reverberate from the curl of his toes to the tips of his curls and back again, and a noise trapped far in the recesses of Hannibal's throat that could have been anything from a bit-back groan to an Alpha purr of contentment.... and only when he felt them beginning to blur into a single entity did Will assent to release him.

As Hannibal strode purposefully towards the front of the house, Will let out a deep exhalation, catching himself against the counter's edge as his bones made a valiant attempt at resolidifying. "I do **not** understand men."

Jimmy's lilting half-conscious reply floated in from the room beyond. "You and me both, honey."

Will's muffled laughter buoyed him as he gave a controlled spin and headed for the back stairs on feet that didn't seem to touch the ground.

Grace was headed to the ground floor library for a book when Hannibal came dancing along the hardwood. She watched amused and amazed as his steps crissed this way and crossed that, delicate and forceful. He had his suit jacket over one arm, then snapped it and held it out before him like a matador's cape. A brief sweep of a partnerless *paso doble* and he donned it, gathering up a flower from a nearby vase and actually claspng it in his teeth! For a split second she saw the shadow of his brother dancing along with him, a smiling immortal imago of Peter Pan, and the sight clutched her heart in a fond squeeze.

The dance came to an abrupt but dramatic finale as he spotted her, sweeping forward and presenting the flower to her with a bow before snapping his fingers and fixing his body into a Latin pose. Grace mirrored it with a tinkling laugh, delighted to see her far-too-somber son enjoying himself for a change. It was most pleasant.

"Good evening, my darling."

"Mother," Hannibal answered with a breathless smile and slight incline of his head. It popped back up to eye her with a hint of nervousness in his gaze. "What do you... think of... Shannon?"

Curious though she was, Grace saw no reason to be less than forthright. "I think he is wonderful."

"I think I think so as well." Hannibal's face flickered through a few expressions, none quite catching long enough for classification. "I think... I *believe* I... I like him."

She gently probed. "That is a good thing, is it not?"

"He is my brother's widow. Perhaps." His lower lip pulled beneath his slight overbite, his sole humanizing imperfection in her eyes and one of his best features. "Perhaps not, though we can excuse the matter for now," he concluded in a distracted mutter that most humans would not have caught.

"As you wish, my love." Grace's interest piqued further with every tick of the clock.

He spoke again, still as much to himself as anyone. "This... compassion I find myself holding for him is... most inconvenient. Should I not be feeling... guilt or some such emotion?" He let out a deep sigh, fractions of a genuine smile warring with a troubled caution in his eyes. "I could not describe accurately **what** I am feeling."

"Happy?" Grace helpfully supplied after a moment's observation.

"It could be. Could be happy," Hannibal admitted evenly. "Could also be an aneurysm."

The query of *is this wrong?* was writ large across her offspring's physiognomy, and in a flash she saw to the heart of the issue. "You are worried what *he* would think."

"Yes." He could feel his expression crumbling, a condition hastened when his mother gently took his face in her hands as she had not done since he was a small child allowed to seek her comfort - or so his father had said.

"Mano brangusis, mit hjerte... whatever went on in the past, your brother loved you. Dearly and deeply. He would have wanted you to be happy."

Even as a gossamer thread of hope appeared, the lingering doubt in her son's gaze fractured her heart, and she drew him down into her embrace until he was enfolded, arms hung limp at his sides as he let the impenetrable shell around himself crack and spill rare emotion onto the embroidered shoulder of her robe.

Chapter End Notes

I know. I **know**. *shamelessly remorseless grin*

Up next, the threat of knowledge and 'what are we going to do now?'

Reminder that comments and kudos feed me, allowing me to keep serving up my little slices of life.

The Threat of Knowledge

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

The mutual aftermath of the kiss.... and an unexpected delivery.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

In the intervening days, things seemed to return to a degree of normality. Jimmy was back, the only sign of his recovery faint shadows under his eyes that faded with each day. Maddie seemed to be growing bigger by the hour, developing muscles growing stronger, having new experiences like her first taste of caviar - which led to her immediately making a face and spitting it up all over the tea table, much to the delight of the Omegas in attendance.

Grace loved taking the child for walks around the estate, talking to her for hours in any language her thoughts appeared in, or settling her in a nest of cushions for company while she attended her orchids in the greenhouse. Jimmy remarked once to Will that the little tunes Grace had taken to crooning at the baby were not sounds heard in the house since the boys were small, and Will found himself blinking away the salt sting of tears that threatened anytime he heard them through the baby monitor or carried on the breeze from the wide lawn.

The only piece of normal that did not feel such was Hannibal's absence. While originally it had not been unusual for the Alpha to only come to family dinner once a week, he had been in attendance more frequently and Will found he... missed him. The thrill of their kisses played on a loop in his mind, like a silly love song stuck on repeat.

For his part, the Alpha in question was throwing himself into work to avoid too deep an examination of the last interaction he had shared with the charming Omega. Dissecting the typical neuroses of others was not enough and Bedelia kept his days running far too smoothly to keep his mind occupied with petty minutiae. Desperate for distraction, he threw together a dinner party on 48 hours' notice that was nevertheless impressively attended by the Beltway elite. It was a triumph, if not up to his usual sparkling standard, and he was a perfectly civil host and chef even if his conversational skills left a bit to be desired - not that anyone dared say so to his face. The sole exception was Ellen Komeda, an Omegan socialite who had famously wed herself. The moment the last guest departed, she softly hooked him with nails varnished a glossy carmine (perfectly coordinated to her shoes) and subtly interrogated him about whomever it was that had thrown him into such an uncharacteristic tizzy. The diminutive novelist (whom Hannibal had always indulged out of a rare and genuine fondness) kept at him for the better part of half an hour, only allowing herself to be ushered into her patiently waiting towncar after Hannibal made a convincingly vague promise that she

could absolutely meet the miraculous mystery - at such a time as they were solidly on the same ground regarding the state and classification of their relationship.

And then he spent a further 2 days lost in musings and contemplation over just what in the seven hells that relationship was or even could be, weighing need against want, setting duty versus desire. In a more formidable state of mind, he simply resolved to learn more, considering knowledge the pinnacle of necessity - one could not fashion bricks without clay, after all. In his more whimsically indulgent moments, Hannibal sketched, carefully sharpened pencil committing expressions and poses and fanciful scenes of the Omega to page after page of the heavy paper in his sketchbook. Following a particularly lurid dream from which he'd awoken panting and achingly hard, he had envisioned a piece done not in plain charcoal but ash, representative of some frightful residue of a burned-out world that left just enough room for them to simply be and be together.

When he gave himself free rein to think of Shannon and the potential for any kind of future for them, his brain stalled like a high-performance engine sabotaged with sugar. When he tried to force his mind to other topics, it would invariably find any link (no matter how tenuous) to lead him back to the younger man.

Selecting the tableware for the party had made him realize the thin blue pattern on the second set he was considering was the exact shade of the Omega's eyes. Dessert for the party had to be amended twice when first roasting chestnuts and then the aroma of spiced caramel made him think of Shannon's mouthwatering scent whenever his emotions ran high; he eventually served *Sanguinaccio Dolce*, much to the delight of his guests. Even Bedelia became a source of unintentional fuel for the fire, when following a day he had been mostly good (only finding Shannon's face sketched in his note margins twice) he stepped out into the reception area and spotted a 2 page spread documenting his family in a gossip magazine on her desk - the long cool female's sole vice. Telephoto candids of Grace and Shannon the day of their makeover tour and a shot of Hannibal holding his pretzel as the pair walked through downtown dotted a few paragraphs of schmaltzy tripe about the healing power of family and rife speculation over a possible 'twinterchange.' *Someone clearly considers themselves the height of wit*, Hannibal thought bitterly as he immediately made a mental note to sue the rag, either willfully ignoring or simply missing the nudge this unexpected jolt had given him in the direction of a decision.

That same afternoon during Maddie's naptime, Will stepped through to the salon seeking Grace, who was lounging on the settee with an elegant black cigarette holder as she sorted correspondence. Will spotted the questionable indulgence (which he knew she was **not** supposed to be indulging in, according to her doctors) just as he noted her ears perk up at the sound of his approach, causing her to ram the holder into a nearby vase of lilies.

She smiled up at him with a 'butter wouldn't melt' expression, eyes just a tad too wide for believability even if he didn't know what she'd just been up to, and presented her cheek for a kiss - which he happily granted as he retrieved the still smoldering Dunhill from the holder and held it up for inspection. "Nice try though," Will allowed kindly as he crushed the butt into a shallow pewter tray.

Grace managed a dignified cough as she let out the last lungful of contained smoke, and a touch of ruefulness entered her lively eyes. "Just promise you will not tell Jimmy. I would never hear the end of it." Will exhaled a fond huff, coupled with an affectionate roll of his eyes before crossing his heart with a fingertip and holding up his hand like he was testifying in a court of law. Grace immediately clutched his hand in her own and sat regarding him for a short while, until he found himself fighting an urge to squirm.

"What?" He finally asked, a nervous chuckle breaking up the monosyllable.

"How are things?"

Oh. There were far too many potentialities lurking behind that simple query. "Any... particular things?"

"You and my son, for an instance."

Oh. That. "Oh. That?" Will tried for noncommittal and felt himself failing; in mild desperation, he even punctuated with a 'psh' sort of hand gesture, immediately regretting the limp wave. "Nothing special." A single flawless brow raised into an arc of amusement, and Will gulped. "I mean, special, *obviously* - it's... Hannibal. But... y'know... nothing to - to... tell. Yet."

She seemed willing to let him off the hook for the time being, though she hit him with a look that spoke volumes about where she expected to be in the order of things the instant there was something to tell. Another quiet moment of examination, the soft caress of a thumb over the apple of his cheek, and she plucked a pale green square from the table before her.

"On a lighter note, you finally have some mail. I think perhaps some of your old friends have begun to look you up."

As Will accepted the small envelope with what he hoped was a neutral expression, he examined the plain typeface addressed to:

SHANNON LECTER
C/O LECTER ESTATE
GUILFORD, MD 21218

It had a Manhattan postmark and no return address either front or back. As he slid a finger under the flap to open it, he got a paper cut on his knuckle; a tiny swipe of blood ended up on the index card inside.

Grace had just reached for a fresh fountain pen and a stack of social invitations when she felt Shannon go quite still beside her and flip the card a few times before immediately stuffing it back into the envelope with an unsteady hand.

"Shannon? Are you alright? Is it ill news?" Grace asked gently, maternal concern blooming in her chest at Shannon's expression.

"What?" Shannon's eyes were decidedly unfocused, and he seemed to take a moment to return to the present with her. "N-no. Not at all. Just, um... junk mail."

If you would care to pull the other one, I have had bells attached.

"Oh. Rotten luck," Grace commiserated, already making a mental note to get to the bottom of things at the earliest opportunity. Shannon was tapping the corner of the envelope against his knee, and only when his nail began a beeline for his teeth did he seem to notice the nervous energy he was exuding. Clenching his hand into a soft fist, the younger Omega pinned on half a smile and asked to be excused.

The second Will was out of sight he bolted up the stairs, desperate to check on Maddie, who was peacefully adrift in her baby dreamland and so unaware of her parent's escalating distress. Unsteady legs delivered him to the bed, and he collapsed on the mattress edge with enough force to almost bounce him off.

It had been a hallucination, a weird trick of the light. No way the words on the card actually said...

But when he drew the index card out once more, the words typed in slightly overlapping layers of black ink had not changed.

WHO ARE YOU?

the front still asked. Will's shaking fingers rotated the card, praying the question on the reverse had somehow vanished, even as he knew it hadn't.

AND WHOSE BABY IS THAT?

Chapter End Notes

Okay. So I was a little off. Won't happen again.

Also, I know this is kind of short, but I promise the next chapter is extra-long to make up for it.

Up next.... Will can't seem to stay lost.

A Question of Will

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

Will prepares to run... until Hannibal hits him with something neither are prepared for.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

That night Will raced around the room at speed, taking only what he needed - some clothes for both of them, a fully stocked diaper bag. He talked to a fussing Maddie, trying to impart some semblance of calm to them both; it wasn't working.

'So someone knows about us. This is gonna be okay.' Maddie abruptly gave a giggle, and Will gave her as affectionate a glare as he could. "Don't laugh, kiddo. Mommy's in denial. It's all he's got right now, okay?" Maddie kindly refrained from further comment as Will unclasped the beautiful chain that had always felt strangely like armor when he wore it, allowing the polished platinum to twine through his fingers as he slipped the locket free before setting the chain on the dresser and pocketing the keepsake. "Alright. I think... that's everything we came here with, give or take. Just gotta get you changed and we're outta here."

A gentle knock preceded not Grace - who Will knew was resting in her room - but the other Lecter occupying his thoughts. Hannibal entered, bearing a large spray of exotic hothouse blooms in one arm.

"Shannon, are you... Are you going somewhere?" The Omega let off a flash of heated spice like roasting chestnuts and refused to meet his eye as he fussed over the child looking at Hannibal with an expression he would swear was fatalistic resignation on someone with a few more decades under their belt. In a painfully unconvincing tone of nonchalance, Shannon replied that they'd worn out their welcome - an excuse Hannibal tried to object to with the tenderest vehemence. "Is this about last week? The... kiss?" *Kisses, plural. Deep and soul-affecting.* "Did you think I was... making an advance? No. I mean, that was... that was a brother-in-law sort of kiss. Certainly not anything... else." *Unless you wanted it to be.* The Omega pointedly looked at the huge bouquet Hannibal still cradled. "Ah. Yes. These are for... Mother." He stalked to the door and flung the flowers into the hall, kicking the door closed with his heel. "You... can't leave, Shannon."

"I have to." Will marvelled at the lack of tears in his voice, despite the saline sting blurring his vision.

"Why?" The soft probe was almost clinical.

"I have... things... I gotta take care of. Family things."

"I thought you said you didn't have family anywhere."

"I don't," he admitted softly.

"Do you... have a job?" Dark curls tumbled over one another as the Omega shook his head. "A home to go to?" His beautiful chin met his chest as he gave another negative shake of his head. Hannibal watched, hands flexing into unconscious fists that ached to hold the smaller man, and gave a decisive nod as he walked to the desk. "Very well. You have made a decision - I respect that. I frequently have to make important decisions, and what I like to do - most of the time - is make a list of pros and cons, so let us do that." He pulled a creamy sheet of personalized stationery from the desktop and the fountain pen from his breast pocket and began notating in elegant script as Shannon powerwalked into the adjoining space, swiping at his eyes, and collected one last bundle of spit rags and Maddie's plush stag. "Make a list, 2 columns. Column A, Column B. Column A is going, Column B is... staying." He caught up with himself and started to write under the neat straight lines he'd blocked onto the page. "Now, if you leave, you will have no friends, no family, nowhere to go, no money... and for some reason, you will not take *our* money. I am going to write in 'nothing' for that. Acceptable?" He plunged ahead without waiting for a response they could safely agree was not forthcoming from the Omega fussing with the placement of things in the open bag before sitting down on the edge of the bed with a slightly defeated roll to his shoulders. "Now for column B. If you stay, you will have a comfortable home full of wonderful people who adore you - a loving stable environment in which to raise a child. You would have a mother who loves you... a homosexual Beta butler who loves you. And honestly how many people can say *that*?" There was a soft, slightly watery huff to his side, and Hannibal fought the pleased quirk of his lips at the knowledge he'd made the Omega laugh. "And... what else? You would have me who loves you..."

The last point was spoken softer than the rest but it screamed for Will's attention. "What did you just say?" Hannibal's head inclined in his direction but he didn't meet Will's startled gaze.

"Do not interrupt. I am on the proverbial roll here. Where was I? Ah yes. Me. Me who loves you. Me who wishes to... bond with you. Me who wishes to ask you to marry him." The Alpha continued to notate as he spoke, each scratch across the page making Will's eyes widen a further fraction.

"What?!"

"Actually that should probably go at the *top* of the list, do you not agree?" He marked a careful arrow to the column's apex and rewrote the point, then looked over at the Omega, who was sitting slack-jawed and bug-eyed on the bed. "Of course I could also take that off altogether." With neat rips he removed the revised note from the page and crumpled it, disposing of it in the wastebasket and leaving a small rectangular hole on the page. "Let us recap, shall we?" Holding up the page so Shannon could better read it, he used the pen as a tracker. "Security, home, love... weighed up against... nothing." His face was relatively passive, but his tone bore a faint hint of amusement. "Tough decision, that one. Would not wish to be in your shoes."

Will's throat flexed, trying to push words past the lump rapidly forming behind his windpipe. "Hannibal..." He trailed off.

The response was unflinchingly gentle. "Shannon." For some reason, the wrong name in that voice felt like a stab to the guts.

"Did you just ask me to marry you?"

He was at an uncharacteristic loss for words, appearing to flounder a moment in the clear blue depths of Will's emotion-filled gaze. Drawing a breath like a drowning man breaking the surface, he recovered enough to manage a quiet 'yes' as he set to his knees before the Omega. Will stayed stock-still a minute, drew Hannibal in for a deep kiss of impossible sentiment, then deflated in on himself with a muffled blast.

"Shit."

Hannibal let out a soft chuckle. "I always imagined if ever this moment arrived, it would proceed just like this." He drew the Omega's fists into his gentle hold, pressing small kisses to each and every knuckle. "You needn't answer now, dearest. Say yes tomorrow." Pushing to his feet, he walked out of the room only to return a moment later with the battered bouquet, which he laid in Shannon's lap. "And these really were for you."

Will watched with stunned amusement as Hannibal again abused the expensive fabric of his trousers by taking a knee beside Maddie's bassinet, taking the little girl's hand as it wrapped around his finger in a fist. "Would you do me a favor, please? Talk to your mother. He listens to you. Inform him we shall have a wonderful time together. I can teach you to cook, and draw, anything you like, and I shall take you to the ballet and the symphony, and the occasional Orioles game if Jimmy and your mother wish to drag us. It will be a bonding sort of thing. What do you say, Maddie? Will you consider it?" Maddie burbled happily that she would give it all due consideration, then proceeded to spew strained beets all over Hannibal's hand, wrist, and platinum cufflink. Will's eyes went even wider, but Hannibal took the incident in remarkable stride, merely rising as he produced a handkerchief and tended to the virulent mess. "Well. I suppose that settles it." He pressed a kiss to Will's forehead with exquisite tenderness. "Now you have to marry me."

With that, he took his leave again, bidding them *bon nuit* as he closed the door.

Will set the flowers aside and took up a spit rag and some wipes, cleaning Maddie with tender resolution and fighting the tears that wanted desperately to fall. "Baby girl, believe me. No matter how hard you try, you could never screw up your life as badly as I've screwed up mine." Maddie's coo felt like a gentle disagreement with her mother's assessment.

In no time at all, Will had her changed; he grabbed up the packed bags with one hand and kept a firm grip on Maddie in her Snugli with the other as he sped down the stairs towards a waiting taxi. Nothing stopped him, not even Grace's faint call of his name as the door pulled closed behind them.

Chapter End Notes

Hey. So did you know you can get locked out of your AO3 account? *chipper wide-eyed sarcasm* I didn't!

Specifically I could read and reply but not post. No clue. Anyway, I'm in now, and the next section will either be up Sunday or on the usual day. We'll see.

Up next: Will gets collected.

If You Can See the Good in Me, Then I Guess I'm Not All Bad...

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

In which Will tries to run... and ends up where he needs to be.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Jimmy found him at the train station.

He was perched on a bench outside, anxiously waiting for another lumbering beast to take him somewhere new, fidgeting with a thread on the shaking leg of his jeans to focus on anything but the thought of actually getting on a train again. He tried not to think about the possibility that if the crash hadn't happened, if Mads and Hanne had brought him along, he might have ended up here all those weeks ago. As it was, he was leaving, feeling like a chess piece in the wrong spot after being knocked off the board.

"Alright. What are you doing here?"

Will barely suppressed a snort at the sudden flashback of being in the benevolently strict principal's office at the Parish school back home. "I could ask you the same thing."

"I'm finding you. Your turn. Why are you running away?"

"I'm not running away. I'm just... leaving in a hurry."

The Beta let out a noise that could only be called an 'ugh.'

"What do you think this is, huh? Some cheesy movie, some zany TV show? Characters just entering and exiting at random? No. I want to know where you're going, young man, and I want to know *now*." Just for a moment Will was transported back to his first dinner at the Lecters, and what Father Brian had told him transpired after he'd run for his room. He thought of the walk through the city he'd shared with Hannibal, the evident fondness the man had for the surrogate parent he'd found in the Beta that Will understood so personally now.

"Well, I can't tell you... because I don't know."

"Well then, I can't let you go." The Beta regarded him with tolerant impatience, arms crossed over his uniform jacket and looking so strangely adorable Will desperately wanted to hug him. It made his heart break just a little more.

"Look, Jimmy. I appreciate what you're trying to do, but it's *over*, okay?" He deflated a little, abandoning the loose thread to tangle his fingers in his curls. "This whole... crazy ride is over."

The Beta refused to give an inch. "Why?"

"Because." Will huffed, emotion and too many things to say crowding in his throat. "I've got... shit in my past that could wreck everything., and I can't be responsible for any more heartache. Not to them."

Jimmy watched him for a long minute, until a horn blast sounded in the distance and Will turned away to see the approaching engine with a steadily rising pulse. Then the butler calmly snatched up Will's sole suitcase (formerly Hanne's) and began to walk away, tossing back a rejoinder that Will wasn't the only one with a past.

"Hey!" Will pushed to his feet and moved as smoothly as possible given the living cargo throwing off his center of gravity. "Give that back!"

The Beta wheeled just as Will's fingers brushed his hand. "Do you know what they do to people like me where I come from? I'm from a little town in the Great White North and... 'things' like me are not tolerated there. The only kindness? You get a choice - between jail, a "reform center" or a tiny goddamn boat in a whole lot of water." He jammed a thumb in his chest with a force Will felt the echo of. "I picked the water. And I thought... I mean, I *really* thought that I'd make it here, like all I had to do was show up and pick out a new life for myself. Instead... I starved. I stole, I dug through the bins behind budget buffets." His shoulders rounded a little, his hand landed against his thigh, and his voice grew softer. "And I did things no one **ever** wants to know about themselves." Will valiantly slammed the door on reading between the lines of that loaded statement just as Jimmy brightened with fondness and dignity, like someone slowly dialing up a dimmer switch. "But then the Lecters found me. A wrong turn, sheer dumb luck. Mrs. Lecter took a chance, gave me this job, and it saved my life. This family... *saved my life*." Will felt his heart squeeze with pride for the man before him, with love for the family he was running from to save, with pain he could not stand to cause anyone but himself. "They're stronger than you think."

It felt too close, like an answer to his unvoiced thoughts. "You don't understand-" He was cut off by the hot griddle *hiss* of the brakes as the train slid into the station like a rumbling beast.

"I don't have to, because I do understand that if bad things are going to happen, you should let 'em happen here. Lecters stick together. They are dragons, jealously and fiercely guarding their treasures. You're already a treasure to them, Shannon, and you fight for what you love. So as far as I'm concerned, whatever else you are... you're a Lecter."

"That's just it, Jimmy," Will countered with a press of his lips against the Beta's warm cheek, deftly liberating his bag from Jimmy's slackened grasp before stepping back. "I'm not." He made his way across the platform, handed his ticket to the solitary conductor on the steps, and stood willing himself to reach for the rail, just put one foot in front of the other until everything was behind him. He'd just begun to raise a hand when Jimmy's voice rang out.

"Hey!" Despite his self-serving refusal to turn around, something in the Omega's posture must have indicated attention because Jimmy's next words were delivered in a forthright and not unkind tone. "I don't know you, or where you're from, or what has you running. But I know this much: *you* are as much a Lecter as *I* am."

There was a brief moment of silence. Then the train doors hissed shut, the wheels began to turn, the engine pulled the shimmering cars along the track into the night... and Will silently followed Jimmy to the waiting Rolls to take them home.

They arrived back in time to see Dr. Sutcliffe shaking Hannibal's hand at the door. Will leapt from the car and into Hannibal's comfortingly crushing embrace before Jimmy even had time to set the brake.

"What happened? Is she alright?" After a flurry of kisses delivered to his curls, Hannibal pulled back enough to cradle Will's face in his hand, eyes tracing over every micrometer of skin and feature as though needing the reassurance of his soundness.

"A dizzy spell - slight drop in her blood pressure. Sutcliffe has been cautioning her about stress since we got the news about... but she will be fine. She's resting, asking for you."

Will's eyes flew to Jimmy, newly stood in the doorway with the diaperbag sliding down his shoulder, the suitcase in his hand and Maddie nestled in the crook of his other arm. His efficiency bordered on the preternatural. The men let out a chorus of 'go!' as Hannibal took the infant and one of the bags, and Will flew up the stairs to the master suite. He hovered in the doorway until Grace held out a delicate hand - and suddenly Will was by her side on the bed, trying not to crush her with his fervent hug which was returned in equal measure.

"Thank the gods you are returned home. Now," A swat to his bicep that actually stung considering the layers between the source and its recipient shocked Will a bit as he let Grace pierce him with a look that spoke volumes. "What the hell have you got to say for yourself?"

There were so many things he both wanted and needed to say in response that Will let the first words in his mouth come tumbling out. "I don't belong here."

"Yes you do," she countered, resolute as a monarch.

Try again, kid. "O-kay. But I don't... that doesn't mean I fit into a place like this."

The elder Omega's eyes seemed to whisper truths his heart could hear. "No one does."

"You do!" Will insisted.

Grace's cheeks pinkened with fond pleasure at the compliment, looking younger and healthier at once. She let a shoulder rise and fall in a smooth motion, and spoke plainly. "But I did not always. I met the boys' father and fell in love, and he brought me here. And so I made them fit me."

"I'm... not sure I can't do that." Will's gaze faltered and he tried to curl in on himself, lest he attempt to draw comfort not his to seek from the woman before him.

"Yes, you can. **You** can do anything." She cupped Shannon's chin in her palm and fixed him with a piercing stare as soon as his eyes met her own. "You made Hannibal come to life, or at least back to it. Much as I love my son, I dreaded that no one would ever be able to do that - except perhaps for his twin. And for that alone, I have the utmost faith you can do anything you put your mind to." The young Omega's eyes misted over at the unexpected praise, and she gently swiped the tears away with her thumb before growing serious. "Now... why did you really run away?"

It was as clean an opening as he would ever get, and one not likely to come along again.

He drew in a deep breath and twined his fingers through Grace's. "Hannibal... asked me to marry him." *So much for that.*

"Ahh." She smoothed Will's curls back before giving his shoulder a fond squeeze. "Does not move slowly, that son of mine. 'Nothing special' indeed. And you do not wish to marry again?"

Oh gods, was that so not it. "I..."

"Or is it the man doing the asking that you object to?" She probed with that odd subtle certainty of a physician who asked questions when already in possession of the answers.

"It's not that, either..." he hedged.

"Darling, Mads is gone. And even though it hurts, you simply must move on." She made Shannon meet her eye once more, needing to see his answer as well as hear it. "Do you love Hannibal? Could you ache for him?"

The answer was a remarkably simple one. "Yes."

"Then do it. The Lecters need new blood like us. We keep things interesting." She tucked the young man in against her side and rocked him a few moments before delivering another swat to the meat of his shoulder. "And you have to promise me-" She waited while startled blue eyes looked up before finishing, the finger she wielded like a sorceress's wand gently tapping the tip of his nose. "That you will *never* take that baby away from me again. Is that clear?"

A tiny smile quirked the corners of Will's mouth up and he nodded before Grace tucked him back against her and lulled them to much needed rest.

When Hannibal brought Maddie up a short time later, the sight of his... family residing in a state of such palpable peace caused the concerning sensation of cardiac swelling. As he went to lay Maddie down in the bassinet beside the slumbering Omegas, he made a mental note to move up his annual physical; such anomalies required examination and he had every intention of making sure he would be around for a very long time yet to come.

Chapter End Notes

I'm just gonna stop apologizing for the delays. They're gonna happen or they're not. Just trust that I'm not stopping again til the last chapter is up.

Anyway, hope you like this. Feedback in any form helps.

Up next, a blast from the past...

The Uninvited

Chapter by [by_no_one_more_than_me \(Lady_Cleo\)](#)

Chapter Summary

In which the Lecters plan a wedding and throw a party. Everyone who's anyone is there....

Chapter Notes

Here you go. *pulls cover off plate with a little flair* A nice, juicy, extra-long chapter to make up for my delay.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As days slid by and blurred like raindrops down a windowpane, the family planned the upcoming nuptials together. The christening had been a mere *amuse bouche* compared to what Grace Lecter could do with some **real** time to bring her skills to bear. All acceptable pomp would be recognized, the Event tasteful without being stifling, declared the formidable matriarch overseeing everything with a palpable glee beneath her calm exterior - happy to at last be planning a wedding for (at least one of) her children.

Custom ink was mixed for the invitations in the rich ruby with just a blush of sapphire found in truly excellent wines. An engraver in Alexandria was tasked with recreating the family crest to seal the recycled paper envelopes with silver wax.

The finest florists within the Beltway and without had raided their stores for presentations - only for Will to put together a bouquet idea from the Lecter hothouse and choose a local boutique for the rest called Game of Thorns, whose owners (a charming couple of brunette Betas named Margot and Alana, whom Will had realized were also a couple) nearly cried when he signed the contract for the centerpieces and accents, and handed over a check equal to almost a third of their current annual intake.

A couturier Grace favored blended a design from a vintage fashion plate, the elder Omega's own wedding gown and an idea from Will to create a gorgeously unique outfit that made the bride-to-be feel as comfortable as they did beautiful.

Hannibal wrote up the menu for the reception and hand-selected the staff, even if Will had to put his foot down about Hannibal actually attempting to *cook* for the ever-burgeoning guest list.

The caterer of record - an impossibly kind Alpha named Scott who also co-owned a Baltimore patisserie called Le Haute Choux - had drawn Jimmy in to help oversee the menu and design the cake. By the time the frosting flavors had been finalized, they'd been on 2 dates. By the time the final tasting plates for the rehearsal and reception were being passed around for approval, there could well be another wedding on the horizon, Will whispered to Hannibal as Jimmy practically glowed while Scott demonstrated each morsel by feeding him a bite.

As for his Alpha, Hannibal spent more and more time at the estate, a nearly nightly fixture at dinner and weekend brunch, fingers frequently entwined with his fiancée's as they began sketching the schematics of their future, the newly crawling Maddie making constant beelines for her soon-to-be Papa or falling asleep settled in Hannibal's arms.

On a few occasions they had even cuddled together, nestled like spoons in a drawer or comfortably tangled while Will listened to the steady metronome of Hannibal's heartbeat. Such times were surprisingly chaste... the few tingling lovebites they left on each other over collarbones, in the meat of bicep and shoulder, and one memorable time behind Hannibal's ear notwithstanding. It had been a simple and mutual decision not to go too far, and one they adhered to admirably... for the most part.

The honeymoon would be the time for all that and more - a 2 week exploration of each other, with Budapest then Florence at their disposal should they manage a break from the bed and all other weight-bearing surfaces in their rented apartments. Upon their return, the childproofing and conversion of space in Hannibal's house to a nursery and more appropriate master suite should be completed, and mother and daughter would take their place in their new home - and new lives as true Lecters.

It scared Will to even *think* it lest he jinx himself, and the pale green card stamped with dark questions still hovered in the back of his mind, but at the moment life seemed... perfect.

The night of the rehearsal dinner was clear and cool.

Everyone who was anyone danced and mingled in their finery by the marina while sanctioned paparazzi roamed around snapping photos for the morning editions. Waiters flitted here and there with trays of bright, fanciful cocktails and other generous offerings from the bar. Tables groaned under the weight of sushi, cocktail shrimp, charcuterie, varied hors d'oeuvre, salads and crudites, and exotic desserts amid ice sculptures of fish and birds. From the interior of a clear-paneled chill case, a massive and majestically detailed stag (the sigil of House Lecter) kept watch over the guests - an impressive sight to be sure, even if the artist had taken a strange liberty and made the ruff of fur on its neck appear almost feathered in texture.

A tuxedoed Jimmy danced with Grace - radiant in a tea-length vintage Dior - and stood guard as she held court between turns on the floor, though he allowed himself to be stolen away once or twice by his delectable caterer. Bedelia was stunning in a column dress of midnight blue fabric so dark it looked black overlaid with a beautiful gold filigree, content to work her way through a bottle of impressive vintage when not chatting with Grace or Ellen Komeda,

or obliterating the poor mortals daring to ask her to dance... though she did take a turn around the floor with Hannibal that concluded with a round of applause from the guests.

Naturally, Will and Hannibal were the center of attention, the glittering binary star around which the entire party orbited. For once, Will didn't mind. He had spent the night so far eating delicious food, dancing with Grace or the fascinating Mrs. Komeda, and either on or in the arms of the man who could take his breath away with a mere look, whose kisses left him drunk, whose embrace felt like home, and whose tender playfulness with his daughter made Will's heart feel fit to burst with love and pride.

They were in the middle of their third straight dance (Hannibal insisted it was their song, though Will hadn't gotten an answer yet as to how *every* song could be their song) when the Omega's instincts kicked up. It felt like someone had stuck a slender and impossibly sharp blade between his shoulders and was starting to twist. Hannibal's mouth had barely formed the first syllable to question his beloved's sudden tension when a hand clapped on his shoulder, and a voice Will never expected to hear again spoke.

"May I cut in?" Hannibal allowed himself to be turned a quarter away from Will more by surprise than any true force being exerted by one Matthew Brown, clad in a cheap rented tux that reeked of mothballs and prom night disappointments. "You're a very lucky man, Dr. Lecter." He took a step closer and *ugh* - there it was. Matthew's signature - the cracked leather of the backseat in an abandoned car. The singular fragrance of the demi-alpha hit Will's nose and he suddenly found it hard to breathe, crushed under the weight of sense memory from their time together.

"Thank you," Hannibal replied with civility too ingrained to flee despite being a little startled by the man's presence and the noticeable effect it was having on his fiancé, who pinned a polite look on his face and pressed a little closer into his Alpha's side.

"I... don't think I've had the pleasure." Shannon's tone dripped with subtext that Hannibal dissected cleanly - they absolutely had met before, but it had been anything **but** pleasant and the Omega seemed to desperately wish they never had. Hannibal's teeth began to ache and his posture went from casually impeccable to an immaculate protective stance in the space between heartbeats.

"You *haven't*?" The new arrival's face twisted into a mask of exaggerated confusion, like '*c'mon, really?*' before rearranging into a predatory smile. "*I have.*" The moment felt contaminated by his presence, sweat-slick and greasy and impossible to wash away. "Matthew Brown."

Matt attempting to flare his scent to combat Hannibal's soothing radiance left Will almost overwhelmed with the sensation of being thrust facedown onto the backseat in question.

"You remember. New York?" Whatever response Will would've managed was cut off by Matthew insinuating himself a little more firmly between the pair and pinning the true Alpha with a hard-edged stare that flashed into brittle congeniality. "And I'm glad to see your mother's doing so good."

A small muscle near Hannibal's jaw ticked in response to the slightest potential threat directed at his family. Desperate for the safety of separation, Will tried a different tack. "We can always talk *later*, Mr. Brown." But whatever nefarious design had directed Matthew to hunt him down was not to be denied.

"No time like the present, right?" He spun in the tight space (a human wedge forcing them apart to stand side-by-side) and slipped a hand under Will's elbow that made his flesh crawl. "Why don't we dance? Exercise something besides our jaws. Whaddya say?"

Will knew all too well what he wanted to say, but he also knew from experience that Matt was more than capable of causing a scene; given this crowd? He'd probably rival a Broadway musical if he wanted to. The look in his eyes was an unsettling gleam, a double dog dare from a real and rabid little canine. Will cast a helpless sideline glance at his fiancé, who seemed lost in thought despite the comforting circle he was making with his palm over the small of Will's back. Hannibal appeared to be weighing methods of body disposal, and Will gratefully sympathized; hell, he'd even help.

Then the Alpha stiffened and unexpectedly took a half step away, perhaps deciding the venue was a little too public for a sudden dominance fight - no matter how assured the outcome. "Very well. But just one dance. Then I want him *right back*." His voice was not loud yet still screamed authority, hinting at what might happen were his husband-to-be not returned with all possible expediency. Paired with the powerful wash of scent as Hannibal flexed his own pheromones, it had a tiny settling effect on the Omega caught in the middle.

Matt's arms were around Will in a flash, holding him too close and starting to spin him away, though apparently unable to resist a parting shot.

"You'll have to catch us first."

They twirled together towards the edge of the floor, leaving a calmly furious Hannibal in their wake. As they passed Grace and Jimmy at the fringe of the party, Will caught the elder Omega's eye. They were already gone when the Beta at her side leaned in to murmur into the ear of his beloved employer.

"Do we know who that is?"

Grace's eyes tracked the odd couple as they melted into the dim borderlands between social event and secluded area. "No. But you are going to find out." She turned and found her son still looking in the direction his chosen mate had gone, not paying a whit of attention to the members of the museum board currently vying for notice. Leaving Jimmy to keep an eye on things, she went to rescue her son.

Will managed to break the hold as soon as they left the floor and a crush of bodies closed in their wake like a curtain. Only then did he figure as long as he didn't raise his voice or look *too* unhappy, he might be able to get out of this without drawing too much attention. He started walking down towards the water, seeking its comfort, torn between needing distance from the party and not wanting to be alone with his pursuer in the near darkness.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he asked through the clenched teeth of a smile.

"Oh, so we *have* met before! I thought so, but ya know us demi-alphas - we get so damn *confused* sometimes." His voice swung from triumphant sarcasm to petulant toddler, and something in Will's hind-brain twigged to the sudden tang of danger in the air.

Will turned and tried to flee up the dock, heading for the far edge of the venue so he could slip back into the safety of the crowd. But Matthew was right on his heels, and there were people coming. He hissed under his breath, "Just get away from me!" before presenting a smile and hand to shake as the passing partygoers offered their well wishes.

"What's wrong, Will?" The Omega ignored him. "Something bothering you, *Will*?" Another couple staggered in their direction, and Will directed them up the near line to the party, hoping he'd reach it himself in time. "Huh, *WILL*?!" The name was spat out with sulfurous emphasis. He couldn't ignore this any longer. The next step was shouting.

Whipping back around, he grabbed Matt's shoulder to hold him at bay. "Why are you here?"

Matt's mouth went slack and his brows went up, as if shocked Will couldn't see the goodness of his intentions. "I thought you were dead!" A hand pressed over where his heart would reside... if he had one. "I thought my only child was dead. That does things to a man."

You're not a man, Will snarked in his head.

"I cried, Will. I did. I cried for you... and the kid... and how I am pissing my life away." He directed a 'how are ya?' at another partygoer, allowing the smirking smile to harden into a sneer when the man tried to slow down and eavesdrop. After he scuttled off, Matt resumed. "I started makin' changes, turning over a few new leafs. You'da been proud."

Gods, I doubt that so hard and it's 'leaves' you peacocking moron.

"Then, few weeks ago I'm running from the cops, I hijack this tourist's car and there on the front seat is a copy of this gossip rag. And there's this profile and shit, with some pictures of the Lecter family. And wouldn't you know it? Their new daughter-in-law looks just like this bayou slut I used to know."

The puzzle pieces shivered before settling quietly into place, the picture becoming sickeningly clear. "You sent me that note!"

The demi-alpha raised a hand and examined his less-than-clean nails with an almost bored expression. "Well, just cause *you* didn't write didn't mean I had a reason to be so insensitive."

It would've been born of hysteria rather than amusement, but in that moment Will was overwhelmed by the urge to laugh. Instead he tamped it down and wrapped his arms around himself. "Okay. Okay, it worked. You got me scared. So what's next?"

Matt's face melted into a grin just before he reached out, cuffed Will's nape and shook a little like he was a puppy, softly roughing an Omegan pressure point. He was just dumb enough it could be an accident and just dangerous enough it could be intentional. "You're so nervous!"

Like I don't have every reason to be, Will's brain screamed, even as his internal systems battled between flight from a predator holding his neck and submission to the dopamine trying to calm him into pliancy as the pressure point was activated.

Matt's hand slid down as its twin came up to bracelet Will's upper arms, waiting til the Omega (following a slow blink or two as his brain attempted to defog) warily met his eyes before he dropped his hold and produced a seemingly genuine smile. "I just... wanna congratulate you on this great life that you've, uh... what's the word? Appropriated for yourself. Hey, the dead chick? Wasn't exactly using it anymore. And by the way, marrying the guy's *brother*?" He gave Will a few rounds of muted applause, then touched his temple and shot it off like the idea had blown his mind. "I- *you* thought of that? Pure genius! Didn't know you had it in you." Pressing close again, he set a kiss against Will's cheek, then started backing away with a smile. "Serious as shit, babe. Congratulations."

Will couldn't believe it. He was already getting whiplash from the out-of-control carnival ride he'd been on since the moment Matthew reappeared. "And... that's it?" *No way.*

"Absolutely." He swiveled on his heel and started walking off into the night, the dark hair above dark fabric bleeding into the surrounding night. Will had just enough time to let out a sigh of weighted relief before Matt held up a finger, softly snapped it and turned back. "Well... okay. There is one thing." *Here we go.* "My daughter. What role do I, the kid's father, have in all this?"

Will's teeth bared and his hands tightened into fists so tight a few of his knuckles popped. "Oh I'll give you a gods damned role, you-" Matt held up a 'whoa' gesture and backed up a couple feet.

"Hey. Okay. If you're not up for it, I'd be *happy* to discuss this with your mother-in-law." He made it a few steps towards the party noise before facing Will again, an air of concern straining his face. "How do you think her heart would take my news?"

The fight instantly went out of Will, just as Matt had guessed it would - how do you deal with an imminent threat to your family when **you're** the threat? "What do you want, Matt?" *What's it gonna take to get rid of you?*

He stalked close, reaching in like he was about to stroke Will's curls back over his ear - then snapped a matchbook in his fingers like he'd pulled it from thin air.

"We gotta talk. Come by my place, tomorrow, 2 o'clock. You remember how I like to sleep in, doncha, babe?" Will wriggled out of his poisoned atmosphere. "Oh, and bring my kid. Call it a... last request. Hey, what'd you name her, anyway?"

The Omega's eyes snapped down to a gritty spot ground deep into the concrete; he sympathized with it.

"I don't want-"

"C'mon, man. It wasn't in the article. I'm... I really... inquiring minds."

Will drew in a slow lungful of the cool night air, trying and failing to put his finger on exactly what the reason could be for not telling. There had to be one, but it evaded him like a rabbit. "Maddie," he whispered, the name like a prayer against harm.

"R...really? Like, no shit?" Matt's expression was deceptively tender, the affect in his voice truly touched. Will fell for it about 3 centimeters, then yanked himself back with a scoff.

"Gods. I didn't name her after *you!* "

Matt blinked, face twisting into a sneer before he let out a cackle of laughing realization. "Oh! *Maddie!* After the dead rich guy, right? Cute. And not at **all** sick and manipulative."

Will's maternal side flared from the slight sting of shame and the fear born of hearing his daughter's name in Matthew's teeth, the reason revealed too late. Then the conversation he'd shared with Hannibal those weeks ago hit him like a bolt, straightening his spine and steeling his resolve. "You come near her and I'll kill you."

With a viperous speed, Matthew latched a hand into Will's curls on one side of his head and twisted, ragged nails biting into the soft shell of the Omega's ear. The air again flooded with a wave of projected pheromone from the demi-alpha, this time bearing a coppery bitterness of disappointment so profound Will actually tasted blood. His eyes watered from pain and molten panic racing over his nerves like lava flow.

"Listen, you dumb - little - *bitch* ." Matt's voice was pitched low and dangerously quiet, the beats of emphasis landing like sucker punches. "Be there tomorrow and bring her, or I'll mess up your life on such an unbelievable scale you'll never see that kid again. And *then...* I'll go to work on your new family. You *feelin'* me?"

Will managed a tight nod, breathless from holding back everything trying to burst out of him. There wasn't a single doubt in his mind that Matthew would at least attempt if not outright succeed in delivering on his threats. He could kneecap Jimmy, go after Grace, attack Hannibal after hours; true, he was smaller and weaker but brutally vicious, and if he had the element of surprise... He might even commit total suicide by breaking into the manor and just wreaking as much havoc as possible until he was stopped.

And the truth would still come out, or whatever warped and weaponized version Matthew would shape into a crown of barbed wire to punish Will with. There was more to this - there *had* to be. Some design yet to be revealed. Even if all he could do was become a human shield between those he loved and harm... he had to try.

Released without warning, Will dragged in a harsh breath flavored with salt from the unshed tears pricking the backs of his eyes like junkie's needles. Matt strolled a short distance away, hands in his pockets, nonchalantly humming some indistinct tune - frightening in his changeability. Then he spun back once more, making Will flinch despite the gap between them.

"You know... Not for nothing, Will, but that?" He indicated Will's omegan suit - a beautiful plummy windowpane on black two-piece over a lace shell, a new platinum chain double wrapped around his neck to make the locket a flattering choker; he'd liked it so much only an

hour ago. "It's a very nice look on you." And just like that, he scaled the stairs back towards the party. Jimmy noted over Scott's shoulder as the mysterious Mr Brown snagged a flute of champagne from a passing waiter and ambled out of sight with the glass.

Will stayed where he was, looking without seeing, a fractured mirror reflecting distorted reality, until Hannibal came down. He couldn't hear a word if any were spoken, didn't respond to anything but the scent of his love wrapping around him like a shock blanket. He returned in pieces and fragments, only aware he was shivering when Hannibal folded him wordlessly into his arms and held him tight.

Chapter End Notes

I'm waiting for the inevitable "oh I am SO glad Matt's gonna die" comments.

Up next: Will and Matt meet up...

Battle Plan

Chapter by [Lady_Cleo](#)

Chapter Summary

Matt and Will.... talk

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will moved through another half hour of the party on autopilot until Hannibal diagnosed him with a migraine and the family removed themselves to the estate, leaving the guests to eat and drink their fill until they fell into the taxi queue.

Upon their return, Maddie (baby radar instantly twiggling to her mother's mood) became more fractious by the minute until Grace deposited Shannon into Hannibal's care and took the baby to sleep in her room, soothing noises trailing down the hallway as she left.

Despite the solid embrace and steady heartbeat of his Alpha, the younger Omega slept fitfully that night - whimpering in his slumber before startling awake, twice coated with a sugar glaze of perspiration reeking of anxiety and scorched sugar. Though curious in the extreme, Hannibal held his tongue as he sent his fiancé to rinse off the nightmare traces, first handing him a clean cotton nightshirt, the second time bundling him into Hannibal's own now less-than-pristine shirt from the party. He gently towel dried his Omega's lush curls, pulled him into bed once more, and held him as he finally drifted into uninterrupted slumber, Hannibal's own eyes stinging as he kept watch for the better part of an hour before following his love in rest.

In the morning, the Alpha was highly reluctant to leave despite the necessity of one last day of appointments, clearing the books and finalizing alternate patient care in advance of the honeymoon. Only when his mother tugged him down into a squeeze and whispered that all would be well did he finally get in the Bentley and steer towards the city, hearing but valiantly ignoring the siren call luring him back to his Omega's side.

After a morning of mostly unnecessary final preparations (rechecking the itinerary, verifying the pouch of travel documents including Will's new passport, and going over the clothing in his steamer trunks for the 5th time) Grace declared things as ready as could be, looped her arm through the younger Omega's and took him for a walk around the grounds, breathing lungfuls of cool fresh air and enjoying the bounty of nature stretched out like an artist's canvas until Shannon began to settle - less tense silence and more contented peace. Following a lunch that was mostly picked at, Grace allowed him to slip away for a nap and lost herself

in genteel busywork with Jimmy - until the faintest click of the front door latch drew their eyes to one another.

Will took a cab to the slightly seedy motel on the edge of town, a 2 story brick affair boasting color cable TV and LO RATE\$ in mismatched letters on the sign. Matt was watching them from a room halfway down the upper tier, though he made no move to help or come down.

The white knuckle grip on the stroller handle as he bore a snoozing Maddie to their possible doom almost hurt, like at any second the bones would burst through and blood would start trickling from the wounds. Matt was back inside by the time they were level with the window, and directed them to the door before the rattling of curtain rings was audible through the cracked pane. *Oh goody. No witnesses.*

The instant they crossed the threshold, Matt hurriedly shut and locked the door, then scooped up the baby, who startled awake and instantly began whimpering at the motion and unfamiliar scent of the demi-alpha holding her like a slightly radioactive football. Will's heart leapt into his throat at the possibility she might flail enough to fall out of his grasp, until Matty deposited her on her back in a small port-a-playpen he hadn't noticed; it looked clean enough in the light streaming from the bathroom. Matt tried a rattle and then a squeaky ball about an inch from his daughter's rapidly reddening face as the whimpers turned into full-volume wailing.

"What the hell is her problem?"

She's got taste, Will tactfully bit back. "She doesn't like strangers," he attempted to explain as he toed on the stroller brake and moved to rescue his child. But Matt held a hand flat and directed Will back a few inches by force of fear alone, and stepped over the rail. He made a drawn-out *shhhhhhh* noise reminiscent of a snake's hiss as his finger inched closer and closer to Maddie's nose, making the infant go crosseyed as she noticed the digit and began to track its progress until it pressed her nose like a button - complete with a dopey 'merp' sound effect. It was probably baby shock, but she didn't make a peep as Matt scooped her up again, nestling her close to his chest and rubbing his cheek against her head, subtly scent-marking her. The baby's eyes were half-closed and she held herself impossibly still, as though unsure if this was friend or foe.

Will had a pretty good idea how she felt, and the instant they got back home he was taking an hour-long shower with his daughter, spraying Hannibal's cologne on his pillows, and going to bed until morning.

"You said we had to talk. I'm assuming you have some kind of... plan?"

Matt shrugged, not quite pulling off coy. "I should just go to the Lecters and tell them all about this nasty little racket you're running. And sue for custody." At Will's protesting splutter, he snapped in his direction and held up a finger. As he continued, the soft bedtime story hush was chillingly incongruous with the words being delivered with the cold flint stare. "And don't think I wouldn't get it. Birth fathers are winning these things every day, and when the mother is a slut con artist robbing a grieving family of their fortune? Tsk tsk tsk." He dipped Maddie back into his arms, her blue eyes flaring wide like a frightened animal as her world tipped. "Mommy would never see you again, would he? No!"

Perhaps it was the threat perceptible even to an infant, or the slight flare of his unpleasant scent, or just the disruption of her equilibrium but Maddie immediately screwed up her face and let out an ear-piercing scream. Will had somehow covered 3 yards in a single step, but Matt again blocked his approach, causing the Omega to bounce off the mattress as the demi-alpha swung the kid up and down, tossing her towards the cottage cheese ceiling until she broke under the strain of the fluctuating situation and started to let out a nervous laugh. "That's better."

Will had recovered enough to sit in the musty chair in front of the ring-stained table by the window, moving an overflowing ashtray out of the way before dragging the kitsch lamp over to illuminate the space; it didn't really help. "So why don't you? You could've last night, in front of everybody."

"Nah. Public confrontation's never been my style." *No, you prefer to hit and run.* "Besides, then I'm stuck with a kid and no money, and who wants that?"

"Yeah. That's kinda what I figured," Will conceded in a deceptively neutral tone, digging out his checkbook and flipping it open to a check marked with a paperclip, a motel ballpoint hovering over the paper. "Just tell me how much."

"50 grand." Will scribbled in the amount and flashed his signature across the bottom, tearing the check out carefully and waving it a moment to let the ink dry. Matthew snatched it before it was offered and looked it over, hooting with laughter as he read.

"Shannon Lecter. Wow." He produced a mini envelope from a drawer, slid the check inside and tucked it into the pocket of a particularly hideous sports coat hanging in the closet above a black duffel slouched on the ratty carpet. "Nice. But nowhere near enough."

Will felt the breath in his lungs drawing to punch out in a scream of his own when a slamming thud made him jump. But Matt had just whacked the top off a beer bottle and eyed Will for the space of a long draw on the foaming liquid. "Alright, you thought I had a plan... You were right. I just didn't wanna let you know right away."

The Omega could already tell he was not going to like what was coming.

"See at first, I was gonna suggest you just marry *me*. The old lady put you in her will - no way she didn't - so I could help myself to a healthy chunk of change in a few years. Maybe less, if I start getting... antsy. I get my money, you and me go our separate ways. Meanwhile I get an entree in high society; can you imagine the hauls I could manage with a little insider info on these bozos?"

"It wouldn't work," Will quietly argued.

"That's because you don't see the big picture, babe," Matt condescended around another swig. "Never could. The rocks on display last night alone-"

"No. I mean... you couldn't make me marry you."

“First, let’s not kid ourselves. I could *make* you do anything I want. And if you think we can’t convince the good doctor... Why? You think Mr Snooty McAlpha loves you **so** much? You already went from one brother to another and he’s one of them ‘honorable’ idiots,” Matt derided, spitting out *honorable* the way others would say the name of a contagious disease. “Just bat those baby blues at him and tell him you fell for someone else. He’ll be the bigger man, step aside.”

“Hannibal would **never** step aside *and you couldn’t make him, you poisonous weakling.*”

Oh, gods. That last bit hadn’t been relegated to the confines of his inner voice. *Mis-take*, Will’s instinctual side immediately warned as Matt trapped a rumbling snarl in his throat and took a step towards the table where Will was literally a sitting target. He scrambled to his feet, pushing the chair between them - as flimsy a barrier as the frail hope Matt would ever do the right thing, but better than nothing.

“Oh, I could make him if I wanted to, babe. And if he wants to be all insistent, well... that shiny car of his is still just a car. All *sorts* of things you can do to a car.”

Will’s stomach flooded with ice water at the casual reference to tampering - a cut brake line or inverted alternator turning the car into a ticking timebomb. Or maybe it was meant to be the implied aftermath of such tampering - an empty street, an offer to help due to the late hour, a tire iron to the head, a body in the spacious trunk. His nails bit into his palms to force him back to reality, to not lose himself in such dark musings.

“But then I decided there was no way you’d let me get away with it for too long. You’d snitch or you’d run. Even if I got into the house, you’d do something stupid or maybe just insane, and you’re a little too smart for either of those things to go well for me.”

And Will saw these things too - a hand, resolute despite the small tremor, adding something not for human consumption to dinner or better still a drink; no danger of Maddie being made to taste it. Braining Matt with a heavy object and making sure the alcohol poured on his clothes and down his throat told the story he wanted. Hell, subtlety and plausible deniability be damned- a paring knife in the pillowcase being drawn out in the darkness, applied with the speed of a mongoose bite against an artery or plunged at an angle before curling Matt’s fingers around the handle. A little rearrangement of limbs, the setting of the scene. The believable quaver when he testified: “He came after me, Your Honor, said he was going to kill me, my family; I tried to run, and he tripped and fell on the knife. Tragic.”

But then he’d never be able to go back, could never see Grace or Jimmy or... Hannibal again. Even with the impediment of his former lover removed like a stubborn stain, Will knew better than to risk them, the loving trust in their eyes warping and gaining a cutting edge of fear, caution, guardedness.

It would break his heart.

“So I was watching this late night movie and it hits me.” Gods, was Matt *still* talking? Wholly unaware or maybe just not caring that Will had been wrapped in the creeping vines of his mind for the past few minutes? “Way better plan. Wanna hear it?”

His curls trembled as he shook his head - partial confusion, part clearing the last of the mental stranglehold his 'gift' had held. "Wh-why are you asking if I-"

"I said do you *wanna hear it?!* " The shiver that slid down Will's spine was apparently taken as acquiescence, and Matt settled, beginning to spin his web of bullshit. "You're gonna take the kid out for a little walk, and I'm gonna show up and kidnap her." Will's eyes went so wide they nearly popped out of his skull, disbelief stamping itself across his features. "Oh don't worry; I've thought of everything. I'll snag a car, have it waiting around the corner. I'll even smack you around a little so it looks like you struggled. Lay low for a few hours, call up with a demand - I got one of those voice changing things from a pawn shop. Pretty cool, huh? Anyways, way I see it, they'll cough up a million easy for her uh, 'safe return', right?"

The room had to be infested. Ants or spiders, maybe bedbugs. It was the only explanation for the way Will's skin crawled over his bones at the mercenary suggestion.

"We arrange a little drop-off. They get the kid, you get your dumb happy ending, and I get... fair compensation for terminating my parental rights."

He looked so bloody pleased with himself, Will wanted to claw his eyes out.

"I'm not letting you snatch her. I'll go to the cops first."

The demi-alpha shrugged, a quick lift and release of his shoulder. "Then I'll tell them it was your idea."

"No one would believe *you*."

A taunting challenge lit in Matt's eyes. *Wanna bet?* "Why else would you pay me \$50000? The day before. With a forged check, by the way." Shit. It made a terrifying sort of sense, the sort of cable news logic that the common folk could follow, spiced up with a little scandal and sensationalism. "Jeez, Will. C'mon. I did a little digging. Trust me - these people aren't gonna miss a pissant million."

Will manfully kept his eyes from rolling as the demi-alpha missed the point yet again, desperate to get to the point where he could- wait.

"...What if I just clear out? I'll... I'll leave." The suggestion fractured Will's soul, leaving a dull ache like someone pressing on fresh scar tissue. "Take Maddie, leave them a note not to look for me, and run?"

Matt seemed to consider it a second, then shook his head. "I'd find you and I'd take the kid."

Chills met with raging heat, leaving Will numb with desperation. "But... but you don't even want her! You never wanted her!"

Matthew's eyes lit with something almost like pity, and his voice slid into the patronizing pitch one used with small children assumed to be stupid. "Will... that's not the point. She's *mine*." And there it was. What this was *really* about. Matt wanting what he felt was owed him, his due. The fear he instilled in his underlings and mistook for the respect he secretly

craved, the acceptance he would never have. The things he felt *belonged* to him. He'd let Will run because he didn't want the hassle of raising a child... until Will had stumbled into the bosom of a loving family and turned himself into a winning lottery ticket.

Even now, it wasn't as much about the money he'd get as it was making Will suffer, punishing him for running even when pushed away. All those months ago he'd given Matt a tiny piece of his soul and seen it tossed in a box with wallets and radios and other stolen things... and Matthew expected to keep it, even if he didn't want it. For Will to reclaim it now was theft, and theft was disloyalty - both punishable offences in the world of Matthew Brown.

One way or another, he'd pay.

"So whaddya say? You and the kid gonna be taking a walk through the park around noon tomorrow? I figured... Patterson."

Of course. Centrally located, lots of side streets. Not likely to be crowded with helpful Samaritans, with it being too late for the skating rink and too early for the pool. As usual when money was on the line, Matt had done his homework. There was really only one problem.

"I'm... getting married tomorrow."

There was a blank look on Matt's face, though for the life of him Will couldn't have said for sure and certain if it was confusion or apathy.

"So?"

"So..." Will's heart was fracturing within his chest, splinters and shards singing with bright pain in his veins until he grew hesitant to open his mouth for fear blood would pour out like the elevator scene in *The Shining*. Maybe he should've known better. *Nice things go to nice people*. "So... I'll... be seeing you soon."

Feeling flash frozen, Will gathered up the baby, strapped her in, secured the bag and left, heading down to the taxi he'd requested for 20 minutes after his arrival. The driver took his bag and helped the unfocused Omega fold up the stroller without a word of acknowledgement of himself or the world at large; it was no skin off his nose as long as the bitch tipped him.

Had either of them cared to look across the parking lot, they might've noticed the late model luxury sedan parked in the late afternoon shade of a sweeping elm.

Or the intense focus of the figure sat behind the wheel.

Or the way it started up and followed the cab at a carefully measured distance until it pulled through the gates of the Lecter estate.

The short answer besides... well... life, if I'm being honest, is that I really didn't want to write this. Matt is such an unrepentant scuzzball that even touching him makes me want to shower with bleach. At least I got through it.

The next chapter is going to determine the final count, since I'm debating where the breaks should be in a few places coming up, and whether I want to add a little something, which would be a chapter all its own. We'll see.

I do apologize for the delay, and feel bad (though it's entirely my own fault) that I'm losing readers because I keep dropping the ball.

Up next: Will tries to take matters into his own hands.

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